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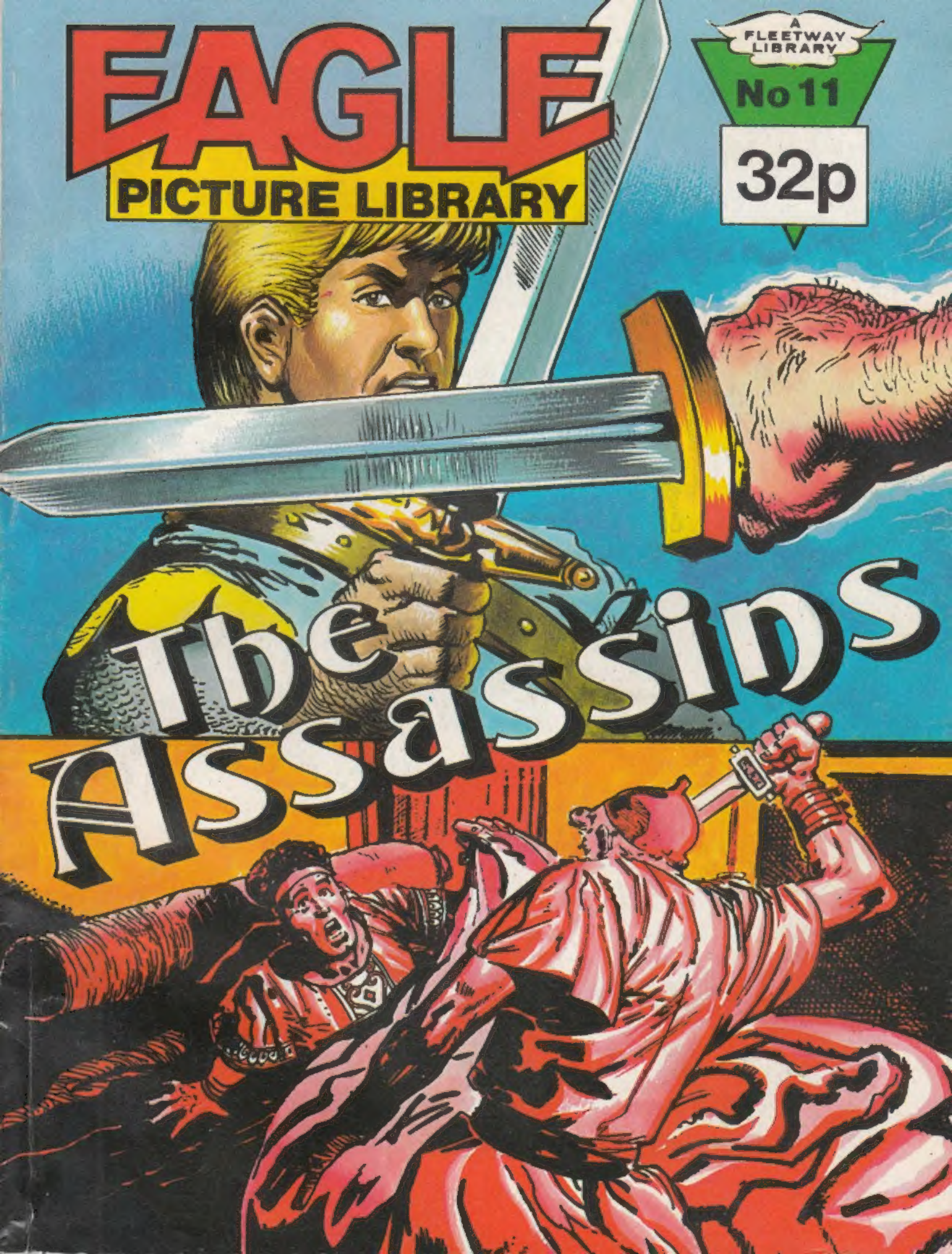

The Assassins

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DOOMLORD

AND SON TAKE A TOUR OF THE COSMOS

AND MEET THE CHARIOT WARRIORS

The Assassins

THE arena in Rome had been the scene of many grim spectacles—and this was typical! A giant barbarian—an expert with the two-headed axe—had been put there to fight to the death. He would never escape alive for, as soon as he beat one gladiator, another stepped forward. The grisly game was to see how long he would last . . .

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THE MASTER OF THE GAMES THAT DAY WAS ***SCARBIUS***, NEPHEW OF CAESAR . . . A VICIOUS YOUNG MAN, WHO LOVED BLOODSHED AND CRUELTY . . . . .

I TOLD YOU, SCARBIUS . . . MY BARBARIAN IS A TOWER OF STRENGTH! IF YOU FIND ANY GLADIATOR TO BEAT HIM I'LL GIVE YOU MY COUNTRY ESTATE AT PHILIPPI!

ONE MAN IN ROME CAN BEAT HIM!

SCARBIUS YELLED TOWARDS OLAC THE BRITON, WHO WAS WATCHING THE FIGHT FROM THE TERRACES, IN THE COMPANY OF GLADIATOR-MASTER, FORFEX . . . . . .

YOU THERE, BRITON! COME OVER HERE TO THE IMPERIAL BOX!

IT'S SCARBIUS! HE'S MASTER TODAY, SO YOU'LL HAVE TO OBEY, OLAC! BUT WATCH YOUR STEP . . . SOMETHING'S BREWING!

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED

SO OLAC WENT TO THE BOX . . .
SEE THAT BARBARIAN DOWN THERE? I WANT HIM KILLED . . NOW! GET INTO THE ARENA. DO THE JOB QUICKLY, AND THERE'S A HUNDRED GOLD PIECES FOR YOU!
SORRY, SCARBIUS, I DON'T FIGHT MEN WHO HAVEN'T A CHANCE! GET ONE OF YOUR THUGS TO DO YOUR DIRTY WORK . . . THIS KIND OF BATTLE ISN'T FOR ME!

YOU'RE A GLADIATOR, OLAC . . . AND AS LONG AS I'M MASTER OF THE GAMES, YOU'LL DO AS YOU'RE TOLD! SO GET INTO THE ARENA, OR YOU'LL MEET THE HEADSMAN! AND JUST TO TEACH YOU NOT TO BE IMPUDENT, YOU'LL FIGHT WITH THIS SWORD . . . A NICE LITTLE ORNAMENTAL TOOTHPICK MADE OF GOLD! TAKE IT!

IT WAS DEATH FOR OLAC TO REFUSE . . . AND HE WENT DOWN TO THE CHANGING ROOMS, WITH THE SHRILL MOCKING LAUGHTER OF SCARBIUS IN HIS EARS . . . . . .
SCARBIUS IS INSANE! A MONSTER DELIGHTING IN DEATH AND PAIN! BUT THESE CHEERING SPECTATORS ARE AS BAD.

THERE WAS A GREAT GASP AS OLAC CAME OUT TO MEET THE BARBARIAN . . . FOR HE CARRIED NOTHING BUT THE ORNAMENTAL SWORD!

THEN AN EVEN GREATER GASP AS HE TUCKED THE USELESS SWORD INTO HIS BELT AND CAME FORWARD TOWARDS THE AXE-MAN WITH BARE HANDS!

KILL... KILL!

THE POOR WRETCH IS CRAZED WITH BLOOD-LUST!

FOR ONE FRIGHTENING MOMENT THEY CIRCLED EACH OTHER, AND THE GREAT AXE CUT GLITTERING SWEEPS WITHIN INCHES OF OLAC'S HEAD!

KILL—!

I HAVE ONLY ONE CHANCE . . . JUST BEFORE HE LEAPS IN AND STRIKES DOWNWARDS. THANK THE GODS I WAS WATCHING HIM CLOSELY AS HE FOUGHT . . . !

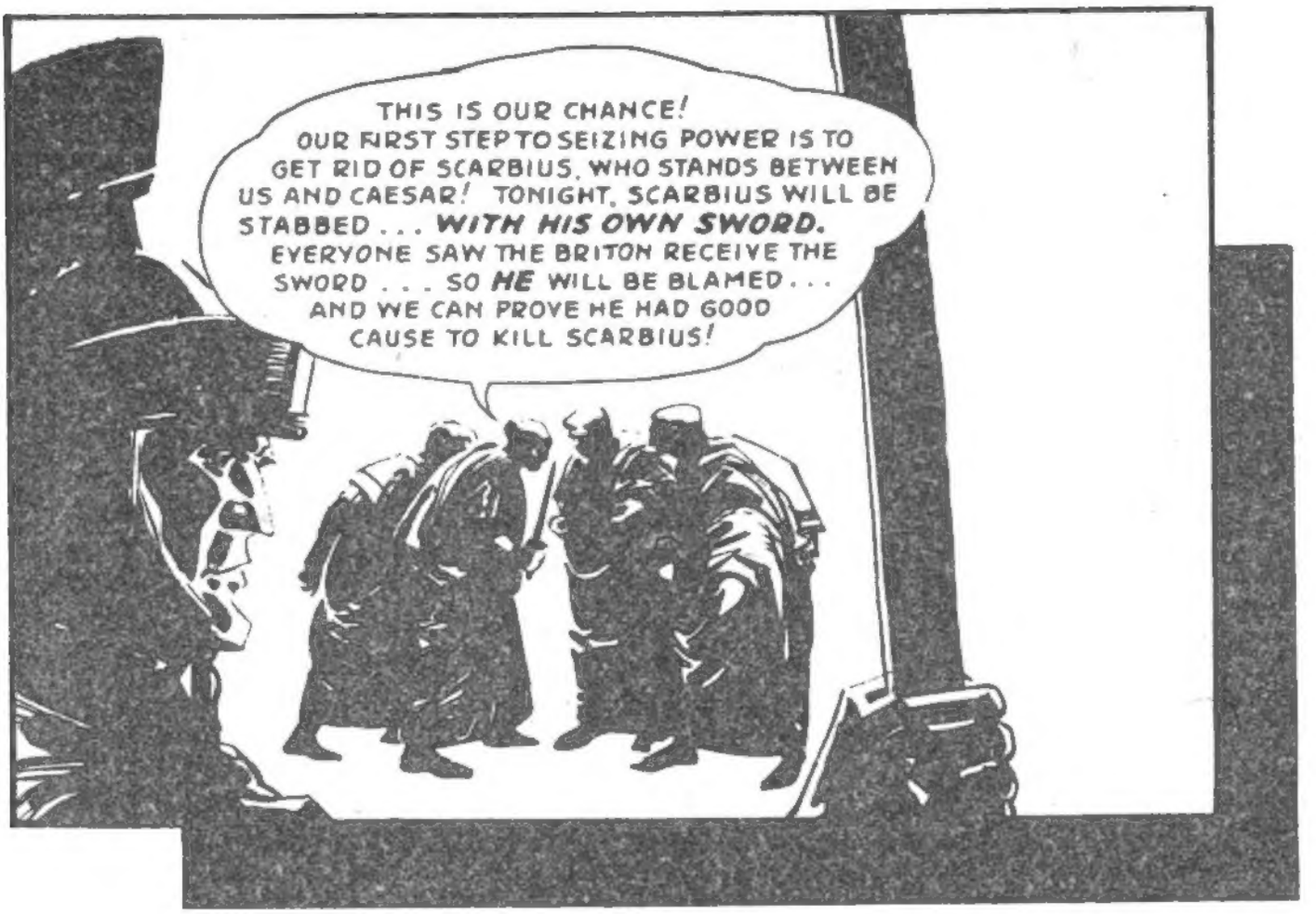
THEN THE AXE SWUNG UP . . . AND OLAC SPRANG LIKE A TIGER!

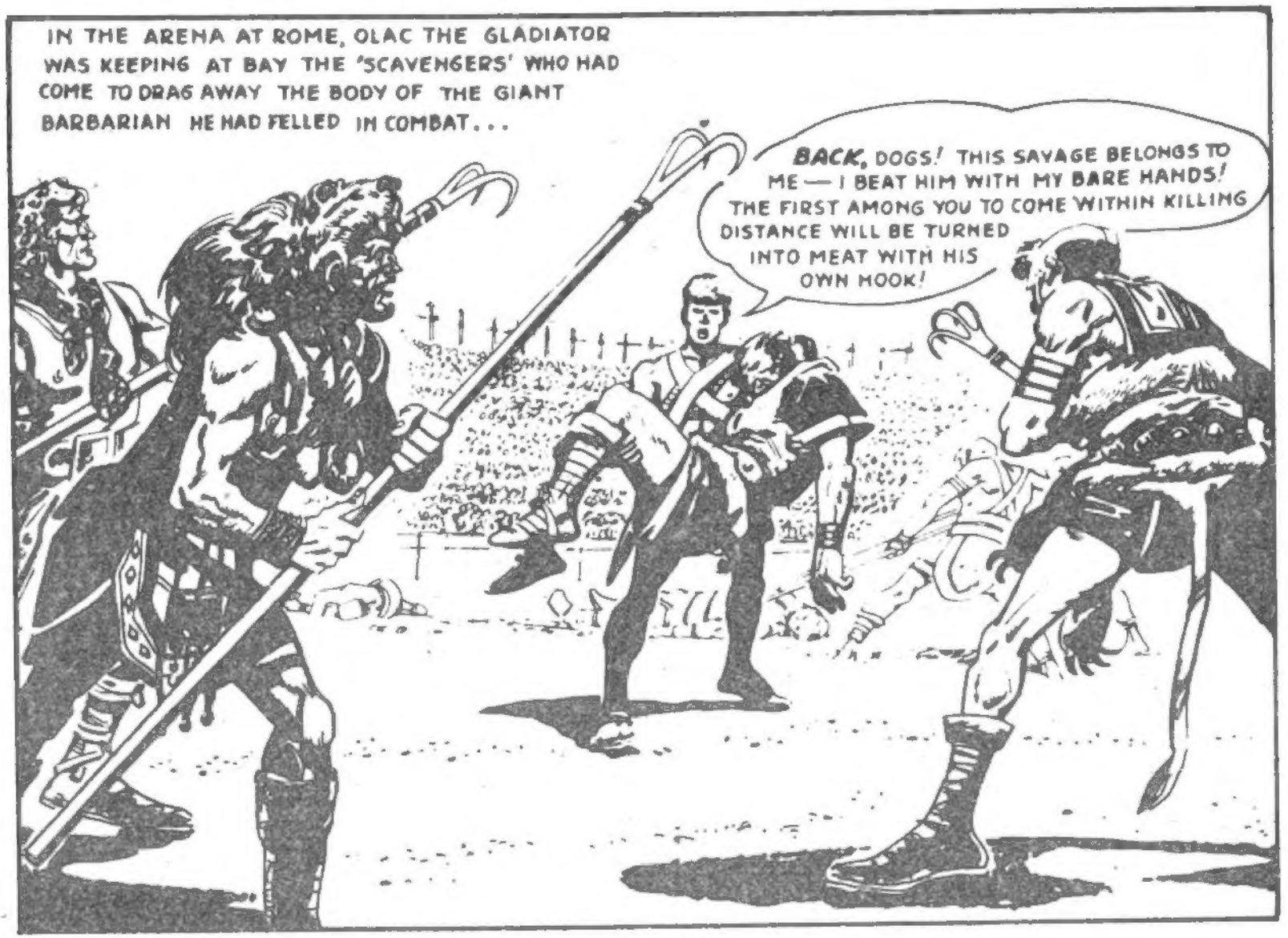
CAUGHT OFF BALANCE, THE BARBARIAN FELL! THEY ROLLED IN THE HOT SAND, THEN OLAC WAS ON TOP, AND HIS FIST POUNDED DOWN, AGAIN AND AGAIN, LIKE A SLEDGEHAMMER!
UUUGH!
WHEN THE BARBARIAN MOVED NO MORE, OLAC SEIZED THE GREAT AXE- SHAFT, AND BROKE IT AS THOUGH IT WERE A ROTTEN STICK . . .
SO WILL I TREAT THE NECK OF SCARBIUS IF HE EVER CROSSES MY PATH AGAIN. CAESAR WOULD BE WELL RID OF SUCH A NEPHEW . . . AND ALL ROME KNOWS IT!
BUT ALL SCARBIUS CARED ABOUT WAS THE VICTORY, AND THE SPLENDID PRIZE IT HAD BROUGHT HIM! HE WAS ALREADY LEAVING THE IMPERIAL BOX . . . . . .
THE BARBARIAN IS DEAD . . . AND THE COUNTRY ESTATE AT PHILIPPI IS MINE! SO SHIFT ALL YOUR CHATTELS OUT OF IT, SENATOR . . . I AM TAKING POSSESSION AT ONCE!
EVEN IN VICTORY HE BEHAVES LIKE A DOG!

BUT THE BARBARIAN WAS NOT DEAD . . . ONLY STUNNED! AND OLAC BENT OVER HIM AS HE STIRRED . . .
LISTEN! LIE AS THOUGH DEAD UNTIL THE OFFICIALS HAVE GONE, AND YOU WILL ESCAPE WITH YOUR LIFE! BUT IF THEY SEE YOU MOVE, YOU WILL BE KILLED! UNDERSTAND?
I . . . I . . . UNDERSTAND!

THEN OLAC, STANDING ASTRIDE THE "DEAD" MAN, PLUCKED THE ORNAMENTAL SWORD FROM HIS BELT . . . AND HURLED IT CONTEMPTUOUSLY AT THE IMPERIAL BOX . . .
GIVE THAT TOY BACK TO SCARBIUS . . HE MAY NEED IT!

IT WAS THE SENATOR WHO HAD LOST TO SCARBIUS WHO PLUCKED THE SWORD FROM THE WOOD . . .
YES, GLADIATOR . . . SCARBIUS WILL GET BACK HIS SWORD, ALL RIGHT. BUT NOT IN THE WAY HE EXPECTS!


THIS IS OUR CHANCE! OUR FIRST STEP TO SEIZING POWER IS TO GET RID OF SCARBIUS, WHO STANDS BETWEEN US AND CAESAR! TONIGHT, SCARBIUS WILL BE STABBED . . . WITH HIS OWN SWORD. EVERYONE SAW THE BRITON RECEIVE THE SWORD . . . SO HE WILL BE BLAMED . . . AND WE CAN PROVE HE HAD GOOD CAUSE TO KILL SCARBIUS!


IN THE ARENA AT ROME, OLAC THE GLADIATOR WAS KEEPING AT BAY THE 'SCAVENGERS' WHO HAD COME TO DRAG AWAY THE BODY OF THE GIANT BARBARIAN HE HAD FELLED IN COMBAT . . .
BACK, DOGS! THIS SAVAGE BELONGS TO ME — I BEAT HIM WITH MY BARE HANDS! THE FIRST AMONG YOU TO COME WITHIN KILLING DISTANCE WILL BE TURNED INTO MEAT WITH HIS OWN HOOK!

HANG LIMP — DON'T MOVE — AND I'LL GET YOU OUT OF HERE ALIVE! EVEN THE SCAVENGERS THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!
I — UNDERSTAND!
FORFEX, THE GLADIATOR-MASTER, WAS WAITING FOR OLAC IN THE CHANGING ROOMS . . . AND HE GAVE THE BARBARIAN A QUICK CHECK-OVER.
ALL YOU'VE GOT ARE SOME BRUISES FROM OLAC'S FISTS! THINK YOURSELF LUCKY!
YOU SAVED MY LIFE, BRITON — WHY?
THIS IS NO TIME FOR TALKING! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE QUICKLY!
SLIPPING OUT OF THE ARENA BY A SIDE ENTRANCE, THEY MADE THEIR WAY TO FORFEX'S GLADIATOR SCHOOL . . .
MY NAME IS GREB!
YOU'D BETTER STAY WITH ME, GREB, UNTIL THE FIGHT IS FORGOTTEN. THE ARENA OFFICIALS RARELY LET BEATEN CAPTIVES LIVE! IF YOU LIKE, YOU CAN TRAIN AS A GLADIATOR!

IMPULSIVELY, GREB SEIZED OLAC'S HAND
I WILL STAY HERE AS YOUR BODYGUARD, OLAC — TO REPAY YOU FOR SAVING MY LIFE!
I DON'T WANT REPAYMENT! I'M ONLY SORRY NOW THAT I DIDN'T KEEP THAT ORNAMENTAL SWORD INSTEAD OF FLINGING IT UP INTO THE OFFICIAL BOX — IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A GOOD SOUVENIR OF OUR FIGHT!

AT THAT VERY MOMENT, THE SWORD OF WHICH OLAC SPOKE WAS IN THE HANDS OF A HIRED ASSASSIN!
DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO?
YES, SENATOR — I AM TO TAKE THIS TOOTHPICK OF A SWORD AND STAB SCARBIUS, THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW, WHILE HE SLEEPS! BUT WHY NOT LET ME USE MY OWN DAGGER?

BECAUSE, YOU FOOL, THIS SWORD BELONGED TO SCARBIUS! WHEN HE IS FOUND STABBED BY IT, THE LAST MAN WHO HAD THE SWORD WILL BE BLAMED — AND THAT WAS THE GLADIATOR TO WHOM SCARBIUS GAVE THE SWORD! NO-ONE WILL SUSPECT US! NOW GO AND DO AS WE COMMAND —

THAT NIGHT, WHEN SCARBIUS WENT TO BED AT THE IMPERIAL PALACE, HE GAVE SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS TO HIS GUARD . . . . .
YES, SIR!
WAKE ME EARLY TOMORROW, GUARD, FOR I AM GOING TO PHILIPPI TO LOOK AT THE ESTATE I WON FROM SENATOR HORTIUS AT THE ARENA TODAY! HE BACKED A BARBARIAN WHO WAS BEATEN BY OLAC!

TWO HOURS LATER, THE DROWSY GUARD WAS ATTACKED AT HIS POST . . .

BEFORE SCARBIUS COULD SCREAM FOR HELP, HIS WORTHLESS LIFE WAS ENDED BY A SINGLE BLOW . . . AND THE ASSASSIN DEPARTED AS SILENTLY AS HE HAD COME!
THE BODY WAS FOUND AT DAWN . . . AND WITHIN THE HOUR ALL ROME WAS AGOG WITH THE NEWS WHEN THE MURDER WEAPON WAS TAKEN TO CAESAR. SENATOR HORTIUS AND OTHERS WERE PRESENT.
I GAVE THIS SWORD TO SCARBIUS WITH MY OWN HANDS! THE ASSASSIN MUST HAVE SEIZED IT FROM HIS BEDSIDE—!
NO, SIRE— SCARBIUS GAVE THAT SWORD TO OLAC THE GLADIATOR ONLY YESTERDAY!
IF THIS ACCUSATION CAN BE PROVED, AND THE HAND OF OLAC HAS DONE THIS TERRIBLE DEED, HE WILL DIE UNDER THE HEADSMAN'S AXE BEFORE THE SUN SETS! LET GUARDS BE SENT TO DRAG HIM HERE!
THINGS WERE HAPPENING AS HORTIUS HAD PLANNED . . . . . .
IT WAS AT THE ARENA, SIRE! SCARBIUS ORDERED OLAC TO FIGHT A BARBARIAN, AND FORCED THE BRITON TO TAKE THE ORNAMENTAL SWORD AS HIS ONLY WEAPON! WITH MY OWN EARS I HEARD THE BRITON SWEAR VENGEANCE — MARCUS, HERE, WILL BEAR ME OUT.
IT WAS JUST AS HORTIUS SAYS, SIRE — I WAS THERE, TOO!

TEN MINUTES LATER, HEAVILY ARMED PRAETORIAN GUARDS WERE MARCHING SWIFTLY TO THE HOUSE OF FORFEX TO SEIZE AND BIND THE UNSUSPECTING OLAC AND HAUL HIM AWAY . . .!
IT WAS AN HOUR AFTER DAWN WHEN THE PRAETORIAN GUARD HAMMERED FIERCELY ON THE DOOR . . .
OPEN— IN THE NAME OF CAESAR!

HURRY, FORFEX— GET GREB INTO HIDING! I'LL DELAY THE GUARD MAKING A SEARCH AS LONG AS I CAN!
BEHIND THE BARRED DOOR, OLAC ASSUMED THAT THE GUARD HAD COME FOR GREB, THE GIANT BARBARIAN HE HAD SAVED FROM DEATH IN THE ARENA . . .
THIS WAY, GREB!

BUT WHEN OLAC UNBARRED THE DOOR . .
WE SEEK OLAC THE GLADIATOR!
THEN GO NO FURTHER— HE STANDS BEFORE YOU!

THE ASTONISHED OLAC WAS SEIZED BY TWO HUGE LEGIONARIES . . . . . .
I ARREST YOU IN THE NAME OF THE EMPEROR FOR THE MURDER OF SCARBIUS!
DRAG THE DOG AWAY!
BUT THERE'S SOME MISTAKE—!

FORFEX RUSHED INTO THE COURTYARD WITH SWORD DRAWN . . .
I'LL SPILL YOUR BLOOD BEFORE YOU TAKE OLAC!
LEAVE THEM FORFEX! I KNOW NOTHING OF THIS MURDER —AND CAESAR HIMSELF WILL FREE ME!
WISE COUNSEL, BRITON! PUT UP YOUR SWORD, FORFEX!

AS THE GUARD LEFT, DRAGGING OLAC WITH THEM, GREB BROKE FROM HIDING!
WHY DID THEY TAKE OLAC WHEN THEY CAME FOR ME?
THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU, GREB! SCARBIUS, THE MASTER OF THE GAMES WHO WANTED YOU KILLED, HAS BEEN MURDERED — AND OLAC HAS BEEN ACCUSED!

GREB'S FACE CONTORTED WITH FURY . .
BUT I AM OLAC'S BODYGUARD! THEY WILL NOT TAKE HIM AWAY AS LONG AS I CAN FIGHT! LET US FOLLOW—!
NO! ROMAN LAW MUST TAKE ITS COURSE! OLAC IS INNOCENT, SO HE WILL BE FREED! HAVE NO FEAR!

BUT IT WAS A GRIM EMPEROR WHO GLARED ON THE CAPTIVE OLAC FROM THE JUDGMENT SEAT . . .
"DO YOU RECOGNISE THIS SWORD, BRITON?
THAT, SIR, IS THE ORNAMENTAL SWORD SCARBIUS GAVE ME YESTERDAY WHEN HE SENT ME INTO THE ARENA TO FIGHT THE BARBARIAN, GREB! BUT I FOUGHT GREB WITH MY BARE HANDS — AND THREW THE SWORD BACK INTO THE OFFICIAL BOX!
SENATOR HORTIUS WAS WITH THE EMPEROR . . .
HE LIES, SIRE — I SAW HIM TAKE THE SWORD AWAY!
YOU SEE, OLAC, WE HAVE EVIDENCE THAT YOU DID KEEP THE SWORD! LAST NIGHT, MY NEPHEW, SCARBIUS, WAS MURDERED WITH IT — AND I AM TOLD YOU HAD CAUSE TO HATE HIM, BECAUSE HE MADE YOU FIGHT AGAINST YOUR WILL!

SUDDENLY, OLAC REALISED THAT HE WAS FIGHTING FOR HIS LIFE!
YES, SIRE — I HATED SCARBIUS! BUT I SWEAR BY ALL THE GODS I DID NOT MURDER HIM!
YOU MAY BE MY GREATEST GLADIATOR — BUT I CANNOT IGNORE THE EVIDENCE! OLAC THE BRITON, I FIND YOU GUILTY OF THIS DASTARDLY CRIME!
IT WAS SENTENCE OF DEATH!
IT IS MY COMMAND THAT YOU BE TAKEN TO A DUNGEON BELOW THIS PLACE, AND BEHEADED IMMEDIATELY — AND YOUR HEAD BROUGHT TO ME AS PROOF OF EXECUTION!
TAKE HIM AWAY!
SO OLAC WAS LED TO THE DUNGEONS

HAVE YOU ANY LAST WORDS?
ONLY THIS — I AM INNOCENT OF ANY CRIME, AND THE SENTENCE IS UNJUST!

MEANWHILE, THE NEWS OF THE EMPEROR'S VERDICT WAS SPREADING LIKE WILDFIRE — AND REACHED FORFEX AND GREB WITHIN MINUTES!
OLAC IS TO BE EXECUTED FOR THE MURDER OF SCARBIUS!
WHAT?
YORRACH!

BARBARIAN AND GLADIATOR-MASTER RAN WILDLY TOWARDS THE PALACE!
IT'S ROMAN LAW — THEY MUST LET US THROUGH TO SEE HIM!
IF THEY HURT A HAIR ON HIS HEAD, I'LL KILL THEM ALL!

BUT, AT THE SIDE-GATE TO THE DUNGEONS, STAGGERING NEWS AWAITED THEM!
LET US PASS — WE ARE FRIENDS OF OLAC!
THEN YOU HAVE COME TOO LATE, AND MUST STAND BACK! SENTENCE ON THE BRITON IS ALREADY BEING CARRIED OUT!

NOW, GLADIATOR . . . MAKE A FULL CONFESSION THAT YOU KILLED SCARBIUS BEFORE I ORDER SENTENCE TO BE CARRIED OUT!
I DID NOT KILL THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW! SO, IF YOU GO THROUGH WITH THIS EXECUTION, YOU WILL HAVE AN INNOCENT MAN'S BLOOD ON YOUR HANDS!

MEANWHILE, FORFEX THE GLADIATOR MASTER AND GREB THE BARBARIAN HAD RUSHED THROUGH ROME TO THE DUNGEON GATES
I APPEAL TO YOU FOR THE LAST TIME —LET US THROUGH TO SEE OLAC!
SAVE YOUR BREATH, FOOL! THE GLADIATOR IS BEING EXECUTED NOW!

THE MIGHTY GREB WENT SWIFTLY INTO ACTION AT FORFEX'S CALL . . . . . .
TAKE HIM, GREB!
YORRACH! OUT OF OUR WAY, DOG!
UUUGH!

GLADIATOR AND BARBARIAN BROKE INTO THE PALACE, AND RAN DESPERATELY ALONG DARK, EERIE CORRIDORS . . .
IF WE'VE GOT HERE TOO LATE—!
IF THEY HARM OLAC, THEY SHALL PAY DEARLY!

THEY REACHED THE DUNGEON . . .
BY THE GODS OF THE RHINELAND —!
STOP THEM, GREB!

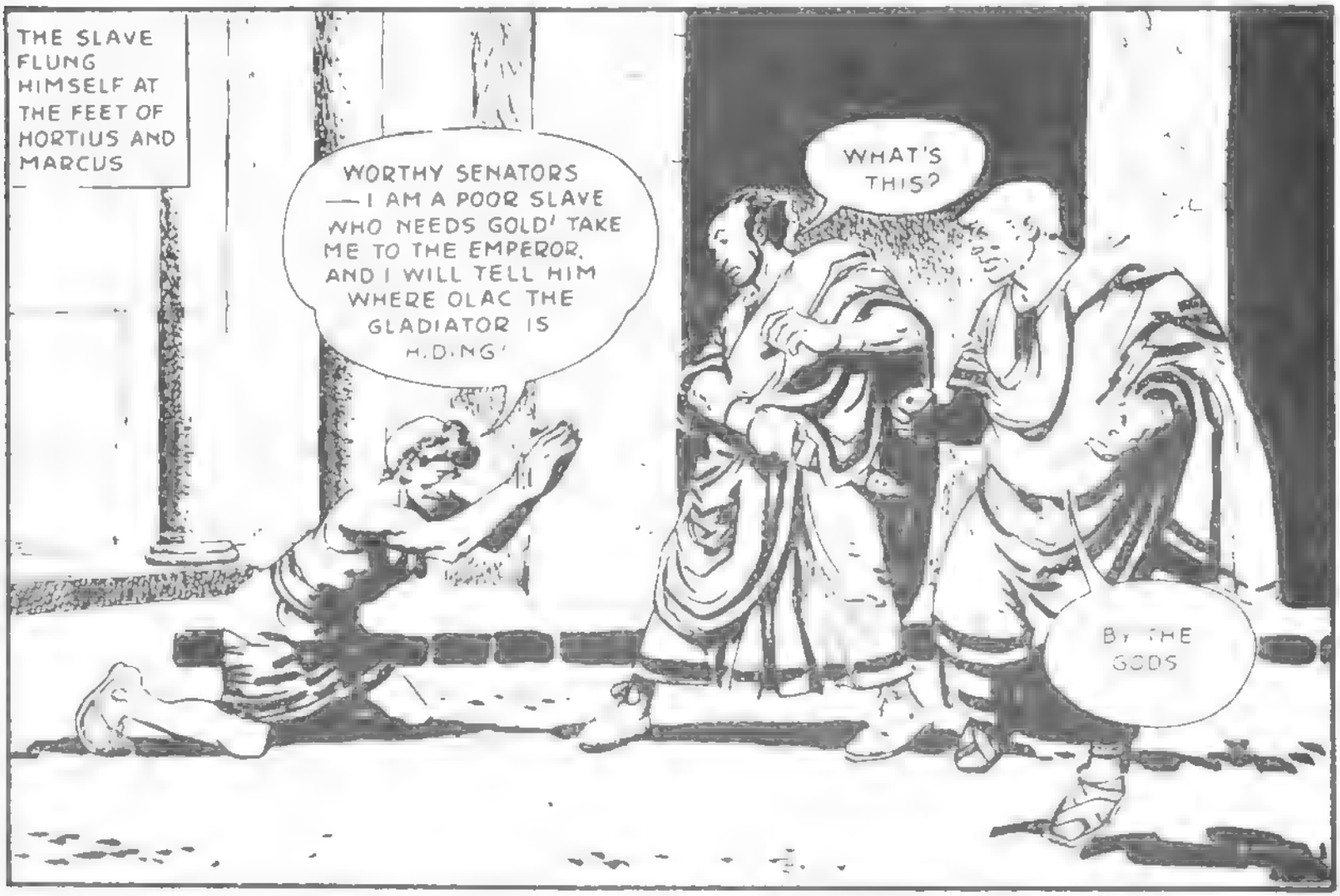
CROSSING THE ROOM IN THREE STRIDES, GREB STRUCK AT THE AXEMAN . . .
AAAGH!

FORFEX FELLED THE SURPRISED GUARDS, THEN CUT OLAC FREE . . . AS GREB THE BARBARIAN LAUNCHED HIMSELF AT THE ROMAN OFFICER!
THANKS, FORFEX — YOU'VE SAVED MY LIFE! BUT I'M A SENTENCED CRIMINAL! THEY'LL HUNT US ALL DOWN FOR THIS!
I KNOW YOU NEVER MURDERED SCARBIUS, OLAC — SO GREB AND I HAVE VOWED TO STAND BY YOU, WHATEVER HAPPENS!
MINUTES LATER THEY WERE FLEEING FROM THE PALACE . .
WE'LL MAKE FOR MY HOUSE OLAC — THERE'S CERTAIN SHELTER THERE, AND PLENTY OF ARMS!
NO, FORFEX — ONCE THE ALARM IS SOUNDED, THAT'S THE FIRST PLACE THE PRAETORIAN GUARD WILL LOOK! WE'LL TRY THE HOUSE OF SULLUS — HE'S ALWAYS BEEN A GOOD FRIEND!
THEY SOON REACHED THE HOUSE OF SULLUS, A FIGHTER AND EX-GLADIATOR.
DO YOU BELIEVE I'M INNOCENT, SULLUS?
YES, I DO — I KNOW YOU WELL, OLAC, AND YOU'D NEVER KILL A MAN WITHOUT A FAIR FIGHT! YOU CAN HIDE HERE UNTIL THE HUE AND CRY DIES DOWN, THEN WE'LL SMUGGLE YOU OUT OF ROME!

BUT SULLUS HAD A CRAFTY, SCHEMING SLAVE . . .
YOU CAN HIDE IN THE GRAIN-STORE.
SO SULLUS IS SHELTERING HUNTED MEN! THERE MAY BE MUCH GOLD IN THIS FOR ME!
AT THE PALACE, THE OFFICER IN CHARGE OF THE EXECUTION HAD STAGGERED FROM THE DUNGEON AND RAISED THE ALARM . . .
THE BRITON HAS ESCAPED ALIVE—AFTER KILLING MY MEN!
ROUSE ALL THE GUARD— SEARCH EVERY HOUSE IN ROME WHERE OLAC HAS FRIENDS! HE SHALL NOT ESCAPE PUNISHMENT!
THE EVIL SENATOR HORTIUS WAS STILL AT THE EMPEROR'S SIDE . . .
YOUR OWN LIFE, SIRE, MAY BE IN DANGER NOW THAT OLAC IS LOOSE AGAIN — SO TAKE DRASTIC STEPS!
WISE COUNSEL, HORTIUS! LET BILLS BE POSTED THROUGHOUT ROME SAYING THAT THE BRITON IS OUTLAWED— AND ALL MEN WHO AID HIM SHALL SUFFER DEATH!

LEAVING THE EMPEROR'S JUDGMENT HALL, MORTIUS DREW MARCUS, HIS CONFEDERATE, TO ONE SIDE . . . . . .
BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND, MORTIUS — WHY ARE YOU SO PLEASED THAT THE ACCURSED BRITON HAS ESCAPED?
DON'T YOU SEE, MARCUS! NO-ONE SUSPECTED US OF THE DEATH OF SCARBIUS BECAUSE OLAC WAS OUR SCAPEGOAT. HAD HE BEEN EXECUTED, WE SHOULD HAVE HAD TO FIND ANOTHER SCAPEGOAT FOR THE NEXT KILLING WE MAKE IN OUR BID FOR POWER!
BUT IF OLAC STAYS FREE, WE CAN STRIKE AT THE EMPEROR HIMSELF — AND EVERYONE WILL THINK THAT THE BRITON IS THE ASSASSIN! SO WE MUST MAKE SURE THAT OLAC DOES STAY FREE — UNTIL WE SEIZE ROME, AND I BECOME EMPEROR!
AT THAT MOMENT, THE TREACHEROUS SLAVE WAS SLINKING FROM THE HOUSE OF SULLUS.
MAYBE THE EMPEROR HIMSELF WILL PAY ME MUCH GOLD FOR THE NEWS THAT I HAVE!

TOMORROW, MARCUS, I AM MASTER OF THE GAMES — AND THE EMPEROR IS COMING TO THE ARENA TO SEE THE FIRST BATTLES! IF AN ARROW WERE TO STRIKE HIM DOWN, OLAC WOULD BE BLAMED —!
HUSH, HORTIUS — THE WALLS HAVE EARS!
MAYBE I COULD TELL THESE SENATORS.

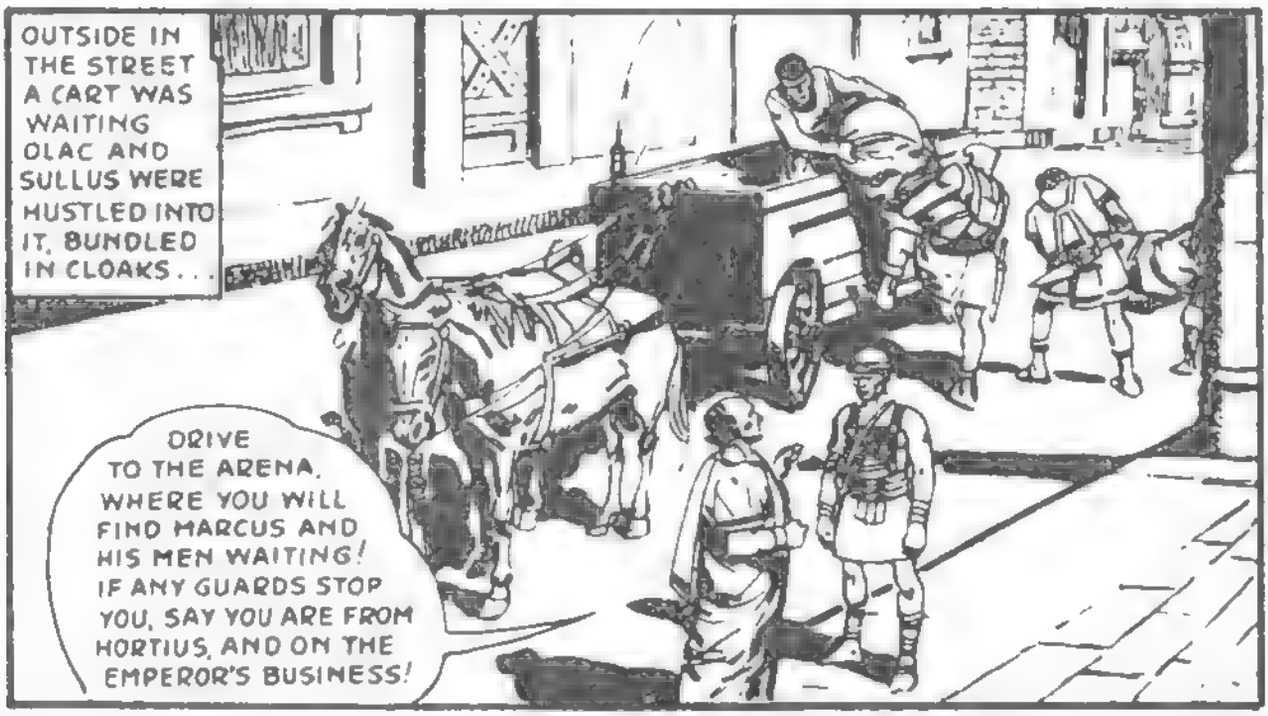

THE SLAVE FLUNG HIMSELF AT THE FEET OF HORTIUS AND MARCUS
WORTHY SENATORS — I AM A POOR SLAVE WHO NEEDS GOLD! TAKE ME TO THE EMPEROR, AND I WILL TELL HIM WHERE OLAC THE GLADIATOR IS H.D.NG!
WHAT'S THIS?
BY THE GODS

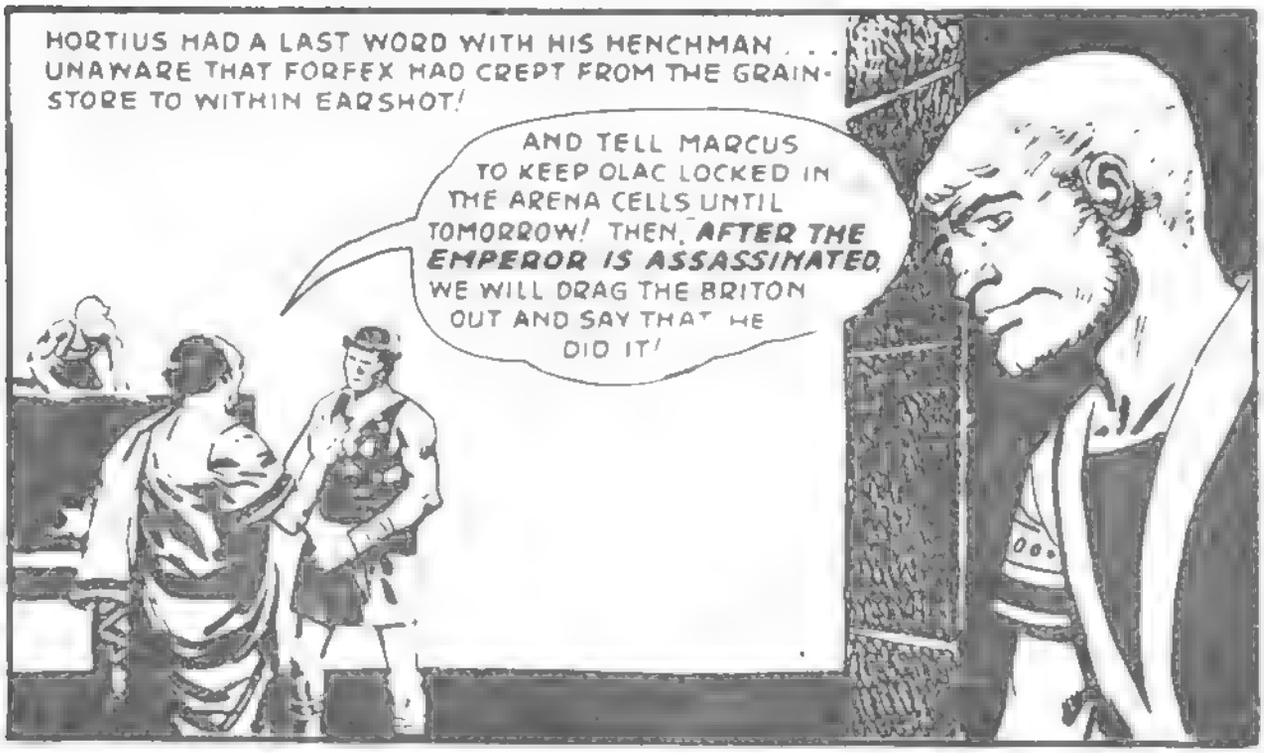
GRABBING THE SLAVE BY THE THROAT, HORTIUS HAULED HIM INTO A NARROW ALLEY . . .
SPEAK, DOG, AND QUICKLY — WHERE IS THE BRITON?
AT THE HOUSE OF MY MASTER, SULLUS — HE IS HIDING IN THE GRAIN-STORE! GIVE ME GOLD, SIR, AND I WILL TELL NO ONE —!
THE SLAVE WAS SWIFTLY SILENCED!
NOW THAT WE KNOW WHERE OLAC IS, WE CAN MAKE SURE THAT THE EMPEROR NEVER LAYS HANDS ON HIM!

AT THE HOUSE OF SULLUS, OLAC, FORFEX AND THE BARBARIAN GREB SAT EATING WITH THEIR HOST BEHIND BARRED DOORS . . . . . .
WE SHOULD HAVE OUR MEALS IN THE GRAIN-STORE, SULLUS — JUST IN CASE THE HOUSE IS ATTACKED!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, OLAC—ONLY MY TRUSTED SLAVES KNOW YOU'RE HERE, SO THERE'S NO DANGER OF THE GUARD FINDING OUT! TONIGHT WE'LL SMUGGLE YOU OUT OF ROME!
SUDDENLY THERE WAS A VIOLENT HAMMERING ON THE OUTER DOORS!
QUICK, OLAC—INTO HIDING! THE SLAVES WILL CLEAR AWAY THE MEAL! LEAVE THIS TO ME—!
FOREEX AND GREB—INTO THE GRAIN-STORE!

THREE MINUTES LATER, SULLUS UNBARRED THE DOOR . . . TO FIND HORTIUS AND A BAND OF ARMED MEN OUTSIDE!
SENATOR HORTIUS!
AT YOUR SERVICE, SULLUS — IN THE NAME OF THE EMPEROR!
PUSHING INTO THE HOUSE, THE EVIL SENATOR GRABBED SULLUS AND THRUST A DAGGER TO HIS THROAT!
THE GAME IS UP, OLAC— WE KNOW YOU ARE HIDING IN THIS HOUSE! SURRENDER NOW— BEFORE I SLIT THE THROAT OF THE TRAITOR SULLUS, WHO HAS BROKEN THE LAW!
NO OLAC — FLEE! THEY WILL K LL ME ANYWAY!
OLAC AND THE OTHERS WERE WATCHING THROUGH THE OPEN TRAP-DOOR OF THE GRAIN-STORE . . .
LET US RUSH THEM, AND KILL THEM ALL!
NO — I DON'T WANT SULLUS TO DIE FOR HIS LOYALTY TO ME! AND ANYWAY, IF HORTIUS COMES FROM THE EMPEROR, THERE'S PROBABLY HALF A LEGION OUTSIDE! I'M GOING DOWN THERE QUIETLY— SO STAY WHERE YOU ARE, BOTH OF YOU!

OLAC WENT DOWN THE LADDER. BUT, AS HE STEPPED INTO THE ROOM, A CLUB WAS WAITING FOR HIM!
UUGH!
GOOD WORK! GRAB THE BRITON AND TRUSS HIM UP!


OUTSIDE IN THE STREET A CART WAS WAITING OLAC AND SULLUS WERE HUSTLED INTO IT, BUNDLED IN CLOAKS...
DRIVE TO THE ARENA, WHERE YOU WILL FIND MARCUS AND HIS MEN WAITING! IF ANY GUARDS STOP YOU, SAY YOU ARE FROM HORTIUS, AND ON THE EMPEROR'S BUSINESS!


HORTIUS HAD A LAST WORD WITH HIS HENCHMAN . . . UNAWARE THAT FORFEX HAD CREPT FROM THE GRAIN-STORE TO WITHIN EARSHOT!
AND TELL MARCUS TO KEEP OLAC LOCKED IN THE ARENA CELLS UNTIL TOMORROW! THEN, AFTER THE EMPEROR IS ASSASSINATED, WE WILL DRAG THE BRITON OUT AND SAY THAT HE DID IT!

HORRIFIED AT WHAT HE HAD HEARD, FORFEX MADE HIS WAY BACK TO THE LOFT, WHERE GREB WAITED . . .
WHAT GOES ON DOWN THERE?
SCHEMES THAT WILL RUIN ROME IF THEY ARE ALLOWED TO SUCCEED! MORE THAN OLAC'S LIFE IS IN DANGER! COME, GREB — WE MUST GET OUT OF HERE AND SEEK HELP!

OUTSIDE, THE CART CONTAINING OLAC AND SULLUS ROLLED SWIFTLY ALONG THE STREET . . . TOWARDS IMPERIAL GUARDS WHO WERE IN SEARCH OF OLAC THE OUTLAW!
DO WE STOP?
DRIVE THROUGH — AT ALL COSTS!

MEANWHILE, FORFEX AND GREB HAD FLED FROM THE HOUSE OF SULLUS . . AND WERE MAKING PLANS IN A TAVERN.
WE CANNOT SEEK HELP, FOR OLAC HAS BEEN DECLARED AN OUTLAW! NO . . . WE RESCUE HIM OURSELVES!
WE KNOW HE HAS BEEN TAKEN TO AN ARENA CELL! AND I KNOW THE ARENA WELL! WHEN DARKNESS FALLS, WE WILL GO THERE.

IT WAS PAST MIDNIGHT WHEN FORFEX AND GREB STOLE INTO THE PASSAGES UNDER THE ARENA AND LISTENED OUTSIDE THE GUARD CHAMBER!
HOW IS THE BRITON IN CELL FOUR?
VERY QUIET... HE KNOWS HE'D BETTER NOT MAKE TROUBLE!
HEAR THAT, GREB? CELL FOUR!

BUT THE ODDS WERE TOO GREAT FOR FIGHTING! FORFEX LED GREB UP TO THE DESERTED STREETS ROUND THE ARENA AND STOPPED AT A HUGE IRON GRATING IN THE ROAD
THIS IS A VENTILATION GRILLE, GREB... TO LET AIR INTO THE FIRST FIVE CELLS! ARE YOU STRONG ENOUGH TO LIFT IT?
I CAN TRY!

THE GODS GO WITH YOU!
WITH STRAINING MUSCLES, THE BARBARIAN HEAVED AT THE ENORMOUS GRILLE . . . AS IT WRENCHED SLOWLY UP OUT OF ITS PLACE, FORFEX SLID UNDER IT INTO THE AIR PASSAGES!
WISH ME LUCK, GREB! THESE PASSAGES ARE LONG, STEEP AND NARROW! IF I GET STUCK, YOU WILL NEVER SEE ME AGAIN! BUT THIS IS OUR ONLY HOPE OF FREEING OUR FRIENDS!

FIVE MINUTES LATER, OLAC, LYING BOUND ON THE CELL FLAGSTONES BESIDE SULLUS, HEARD AN INCREDIBLE SOUND!
OLAC! IT IS I. FORFEX!
BY JUPITER! THAT'S A VOICE I NEVER THOUGHT I'D HEAR AGAIN!

OLAC ROLLED UNTIL HE WAS UNDER THE VENTILATOR GRILLE . . . AND A GLITTERING OBJECT FELL TOWARDS HIM!
QUICK, OLAC... USE THIS, AND WE WILL TALK LATER!
THANKS, FORFEX!

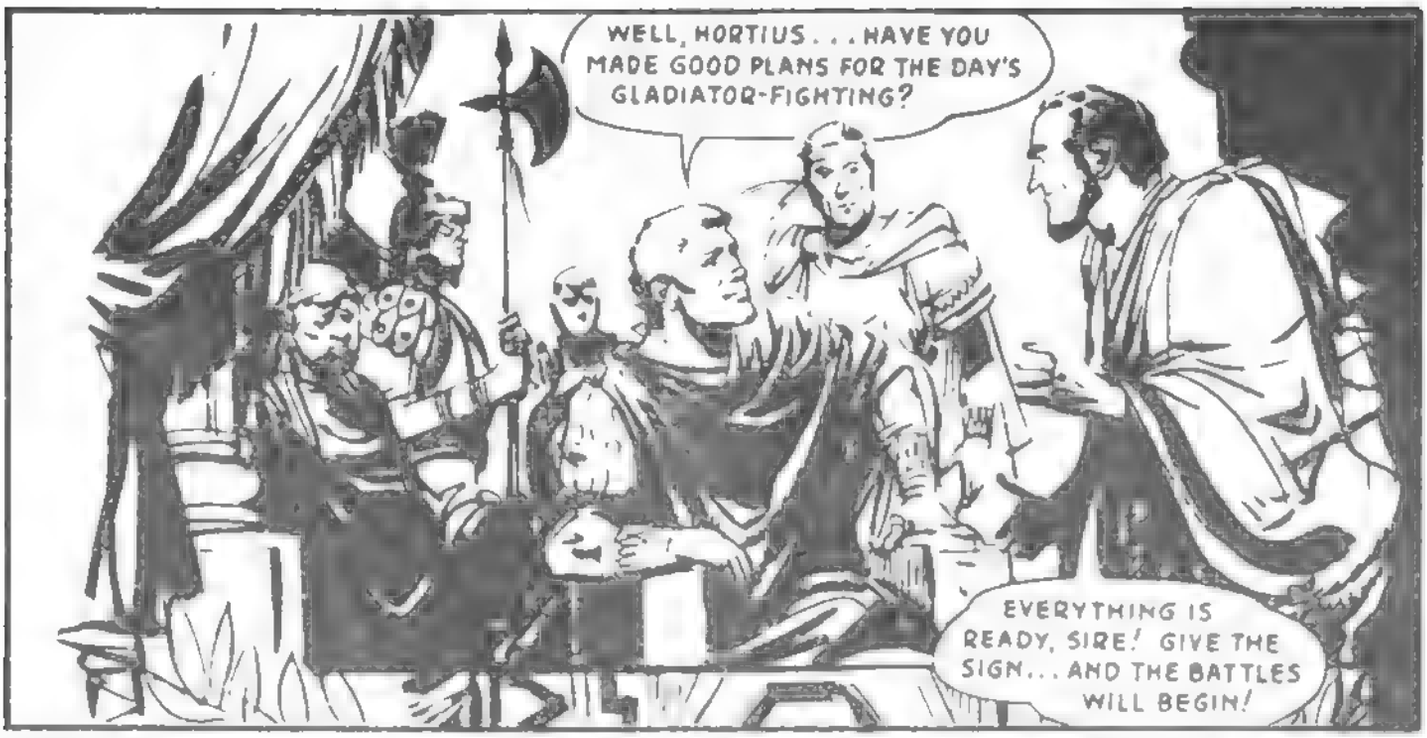
SOON AFTERWARDS, A GUARD HEARD CRIES COMING FROM CELL FOUR... AND BURST IN TO FIND OLAC WRITHING ON THE FLAGSTONES!
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
SEE TO OLAC.. QUICKLY!
AAAGH OOOOH!

BUT IT WAS OLAC, SPRINGING UP LIKE A PANTHER, WHO SAW TO THE GUARD..!
UUUH..!

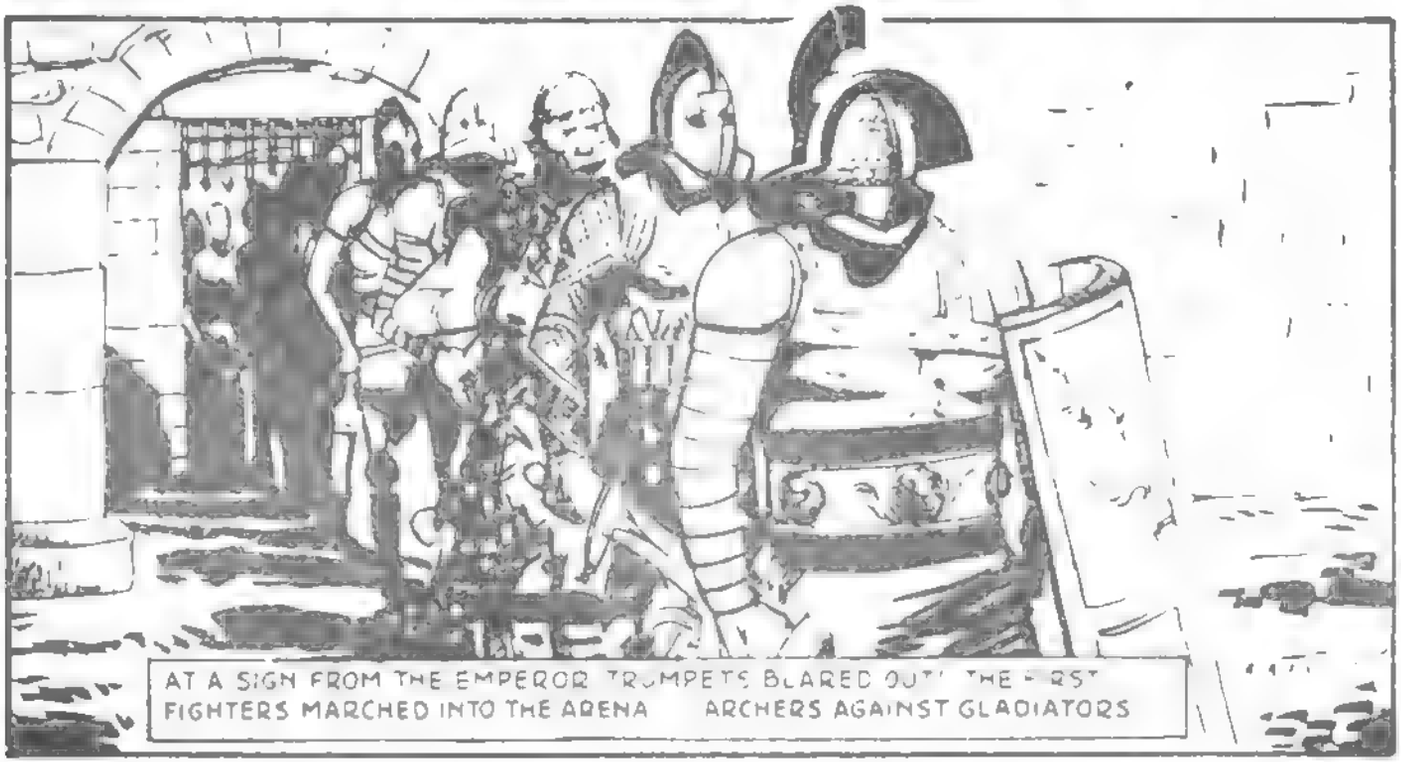
USING THE GUARD'S SWORD, OLAC PRISED THE AIR SHAFT GRILLE FROM THE WALL, AND HAULED FORFEX INTO THE CELL . . . . . .

FORFEX TOLD OLAC WHAT HE HAD OVERHEARD OF HORTIUS' PLANS
HORTIUS MEANS TO ASSASSINATE THE EMPEROR DURING THE GAMES IN THE ARENA . . . THEN DRAG YOU OUT AS THE ASSASSIN ! HE WILL SAY YOU WERE CAUGHT TRYING TO ESCAPE!
AND NO-ONE WILL BELIEVE MY INNOCENCE BECAUSE I'M ALREADY A CONDEMNED OUTLAW! SO THAT'S WHY HORTIUS WAS KEEPING ME HERE ALIVE!
BINDING THE GUARD SECURELY THEY LOCKED THE CELL AND HURRIED ALONG THE UNDERGROUND PASSAGES . . . .
HORTIUS MUST NOT SEIZE POWER THE ONLY WAY WE CAN SAVE THE EMPEROR IS TO BE IN THE ARENA WHEN THE TRAITORS' BID IS CARRIED OUT!
AS THEY NEARED THE GLADIATOR CHANGING ROOMS . .
GLADIATORS!
QUICK! INTO THE CHANGING ROOMS!

IN THE CHANGING-ROOMS, OLAC GRABBED ARMOUR AND HELMETS, AND THRUST THEM AT SULLUS . . .
I'M AN OUTLAW, WITH A PRICE ON MY HEAD . . . IF THEY RECOGNISE ME, WE'LL BE HACKED TO PIECES! GET INTO THESE, SULLUS, IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE!
HERE THEY COME . . HURRY!
DAWN HAD JUST BROKEN. . . AND THESE WERE THE FIRST GLADIATORS FOR THE COMING DAY'S FIGHTING IN THE ARENA! FORFEX AND OLAC WERE WELL KNOWN TO THEM!
FORFEX! WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE AT THIS HOUR?
I'VE COME WITH TWO NEW GLADIATORS.. SPECIALLY ORDERED TO FIGHT BEFORE THE EMPEROR! IT'S A SECRET ARRANGEMENT . . . EVEN THEIR FACES MUST BE COVERED!
YES . . . THESE GLADIATORS OF MINE HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO FIGHT BEFORE THE EMPEROR! IT'S A SECRET ARRANGEMENT. . EVEN THEIR FACES MUST BE COVERED!
WELL, THEY'D BETTER WATCH THEIR STEP! IT'S BEEN RUMOURED THAT THE OUTLAW OLAC MAY TRY TO ASSASSINATE THE EMPEROR AT THE ARENA TODAY! MAYBE ONE OF YOUR MASKED FIGHTERS IS OLAC!
HAH! A GOOD JOKE!


WELL, HORTIUS . . . HAVE YOU MADE GOOD PLANS FOR THE DAY'S GLADIATOR-FIGHTING?
EVERYTHING IS READY, SIRE! GIVE THE SIGN . . . AND THE BATTLES WILL BEGIN!

HORTIUS LEFT THE IMPERIAL BOX AND DREW HIS CONFEDERATE, MARCUS, TO ONE SIDE . . .
THE EMPEROR SUSPECTS NOTHING! DO YOU HAVE OLAC SAFELY IN THE CELLS?
YES, HORTIUS! AND OUR ARCHER IS READY! HE WILL COME INTO THE ARENA WITH THE OTHERS KILL THE EMPEROR, THEN FLEE! WE WILL DRAG OLAC FROM HIS CELL AND SAY WE CAUGHT HIM FLEEING— WITH THE- ACTUAL WEAPON!


AT A SIGN FROM THE EMPEROR TRUMPETS BLARED OUT! THE FIRST FIGHTERS MARCHED INTO THE ARENA ARCHERS AGAINST GLADIATORS

OLAC AND SULLUS HAD COME INTO THE ARENA WITH THE OTHERS . .
IF YOU'RE RECOGNISED, OLAC, YOU'LL BE HACKED TO PIECES!
NEVER MIND THAT! ONE OF THE FIGHTERS ROUND US IS AN ASSASSIN! WE'VE GOT TO FIND HIM AND STOP HIM!
A CYMBAL CLASHED, AND THE FIGHT BEGAN! THE GLADIATORS SPREAD OUT . . THE ARCHERS BUNCHED TOGETHER!
HOLD BACK FROM THE FIGHT, SULLUS, UNTIL THE ASSASSIN MAKES HIS MOVE! IT'LL BE ONE OF THE ARCHERS!
RIGHT, OLAC!
MEANWHILE, HORTIUS HAD GONE TO THE CELL UNDER THE ARENA . AND DISCOVERED THAT HIS PRISONERS HAD FLOWN!
SPEAK, YOU IDIOT! WHAT HAPPENED?
HE MUST HAVE HAD AN ACCOMPLICE WHO CAME DOWN THE VENTILATOR SHAFT AND CUT HIS BONDS! I WAS SMASHED DOWN AS SOON AS I ENTERED THE CELL!

IN THE ARENA, OLAC SUDDENLY SAW THE SIGN HE WAS WAITING FOR! AN ARCHER AIMED HIS BOW TOWARDS THE IMPERIAL BOX!
LOOK, SULLUS THERE'S OUR MAN!
OLAC HURLED HIMSELF AT THE ARCHER-PHALANX!
BEWARE OF AN ARROW EMPEROR!

STARTLED BY OLAC'S SHOUT, THE EMPEROR SPRANG SIDEWAYS . . . JUST AS THE FATAL ARROW HIT HOME WHERE HE HAD BEEN!
BY THE GODS . . !
THERE WAS NO SECOND ARROW TO FOLLOW! OLAC ENDED THE ASSASSIN'S CAREER . . . VIOLENTLY!

HORTIUS HAD RUSHED UP FROM THE CELLS JUST IN TIME TO SEE ALL . . . AND NOW HE KNEW WHERE HIS PRISONER HAD GOT TO!
THAT MAN IS THE OUTLAWED GLADIATOR, OLAC! THE EMPEROR HAS PUT A THOUSAND GOLD PIECES ON HIS HEAD . . . DEAD OR ALIVE! TAKE HIM!
GLADIATORS AND ARCHERS ALIKE CEASED THE COMBAT AND SWUNG ROUND IN SURPRISE!
OLAC!
HE'S THE DEADLIEST FIGHTER IN THE EMPIRE! SO LOOK OUT!
LET'S RUSH HIM TOGETHER AND SHARE THE THOUSAND GOLD PIECES!

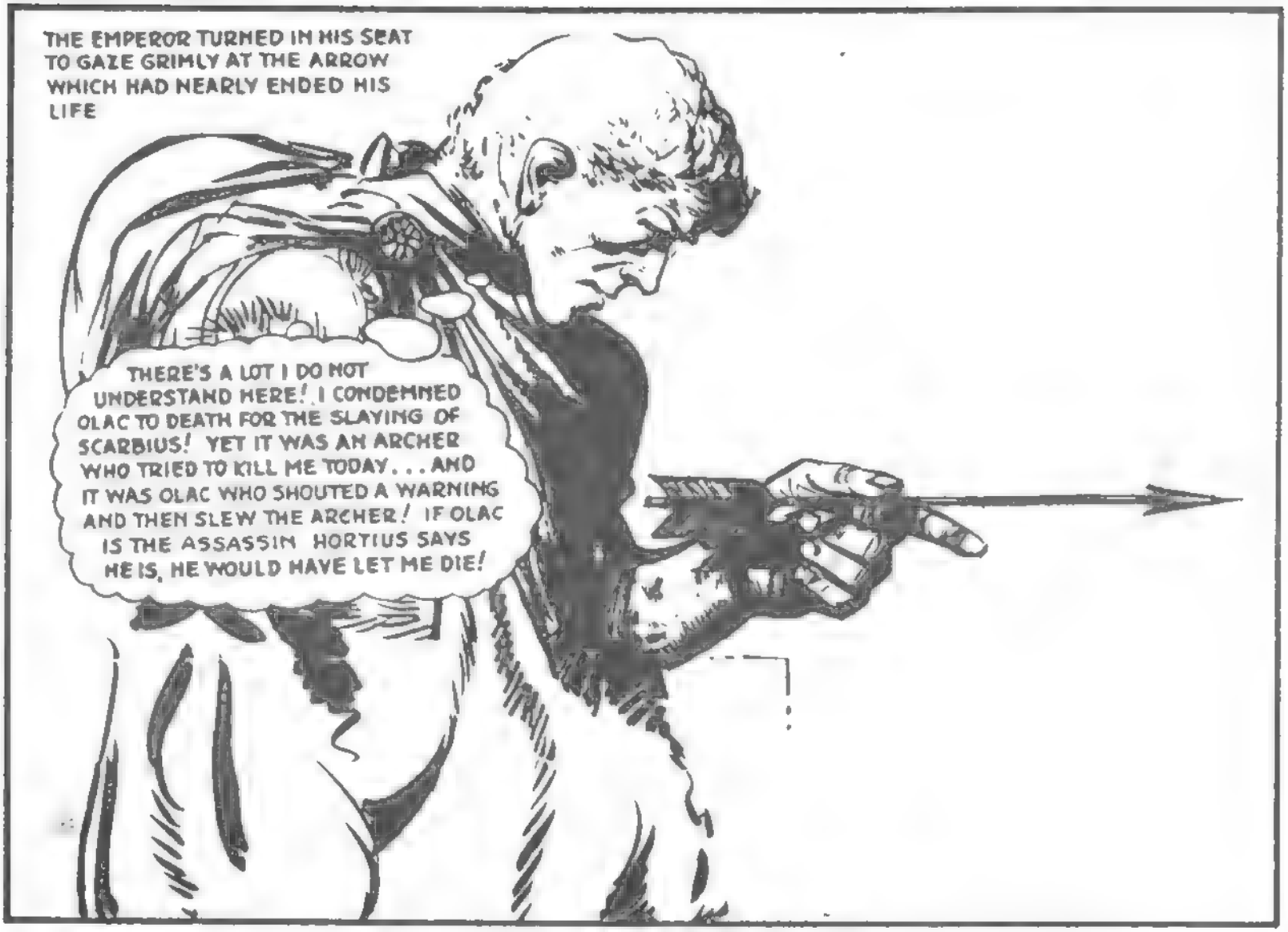
OLAC AND SULLUS WERE PINNED TO THE WALL, WITH NO HOPE OF ESCAPE!
COURAGE, SULLUS WE SHALL DIE NOBLY!
AT LEAST WE HAVE SAVED THE EMPEROR!
KILL OLAC . . . AND WE CAN SHARE THE THOUSAND GOLD PIECES BETWEEN US!
COURAGE, SULLUS!
WE CAN NEVER BEAT *THESE* ODDS!

HORTIUS RUSHED INTO THE ARENA!
THAT'S RIGHT! KILL THE BRITON... AND YOU WILL BE WELL REWARDED! REMEMBER HOW THE VILE DOG STABBED SCARBIUS, THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW!
BUT AT THAT INSTANT TWO ARMED MEN APPEARED! THEY WERE FORFEX, THE GLADIATOR-MASTER, AND GREB THE BARBARIAN...
I'LL GO FOR THE GLADIATORS, GREB... YOU TAKE THE ARCHERS!
I'LL CUT DOWN ANYONE WHO RAISES A HAND AGAINST OLAC.
THE FEROCITY OF THE NEWCOMERS' ONSLAUGHT TOOK OLAC'S ATTACKERS BY SURPRISE...
KEEP FIGHTING, OLAC! WE'VE BEATEN DOGS LIKE THESE BEFORE!

WITHIN MINUTES, NOT AN ARCHER WAS LEFT ALIVE . . . AND THE ENEMY GLADIATORS WERE RETREATING IN DISORDER!
SEE HOW THEY RUN, OLAC! AND THERE GOES GREB, HARD ON THEIR HEELS!
BY THE GODS . . THAT'S HORTIUS HE'S PURSUING!

OLAC REACHED GREB JUST IN TIME TO STOP THE FATAL BLOW!
LET THAT ONE LIVE, GREB . . . HE'S HORTIUS, THE SENATOR! IF WE KILL HIM NOW, I MAY NEVER BE ABLE TO PROVE MY INNOCENCE OF THE CRIMES HE'S PINNED ON ME!

AS OLAC, GREB, FORFEX AND SULLUS RAN FROM THE ARENA . . .
QUICK, CAESAR . . . SEND GUARDS TO PREVENT THEIR ESCAPE!
WHY, MARCUS? THEY FOUGHT WELL. AND IF THEY ARE ASSASSINS, WHY DID THEY SPARE HORTIUS WHEN THEY HAD HIM AT THEIR MERCY?


THE EMPEROR TURNED IN HIS SEAT TO GAZE GRIMLY AT THE ARROW WHICH HAD NEARLY ENDED HIS LIFE
THERE'S A LOT I DO NOT UNDERSTAND HERE! I CONDEMNED OLAC TO DEATH FOR THE SLAYING OF SCARBIUS! YET IT WAS AN ARCHER WHO TRIED TO KILL ME TODAY... AND IT WAS OLAC WHO SHOUTED A WARNING AND THEN SLEW THE ARCHER! IF OLAC IS THE ASSASSIN HORTIUS SAYS HE IS, HE WOULD HAVE LET ME DIE!

THE EMPEROR TURNED AND WHISPERED INSTRUCTIONS TO A CENTURION . . .
I WANT OLAC THE BRITON CAPTURED WITHIN THE HOUR! BUT HE MUST BE CAPTURED ALIVE! THEN BRING HIM SECRETLY TO ME AT THE PALACE!

MEANWHILE, MARCUS HAD GONE DOWN TO MEET HORTIUS, WHO HAD STAGGERED FROM THE ARENA
OLAC HAS RUINED ALL OUR PLANS, MARCUS!
DON'T WORRY, HORTIUS.. HE WON'T ESCAPE! AND THE SECRETS HE KNOWS WILL DIE WITH HIM! I'VE SENT MEN TO FOLLOW HIM FROM THE ARENA! THEY WILL STRIKE . . . AND THE BODY OF OLAC WILL BE DRAGGED TO THE EMPEROR!

OLAC AND HIS FRIENDS WERE FLEEING THROUGH DESERTED STREETS . . . UNAWARE THAT MARCUS' MEN WERE ON THEIR TRAIL!
ROME WILL BE TOO HOT FOR US NOW, OLAC!
THERE'S ONE PLACE WE CAN GO, FORFEX THE CATACOMBS!

THE CATACOMBS WERE A WARREN OF ANCIENT TUNNELS UNDER ROME. FEW MEN KNEW OF THEIR EXISTENCE . . . BUT OLAC KNEW A SECRET ENTRANCE!
HERE ARE TEN GOLD PIECES, OLD MAN! STAY AT YOUR POST... AND IF ANYBODY ASKS, WE HAVE NOT COME THIS WAY!
I WILL NOT BETRAY YOU, OLAC!

BUT TWO MINUTES LATER, MARCUS' MEN WERE ON THE SPOT! THEY FORCED THE OLD MAN AT SWORD-POINT TO ADMIT THAT OLAC HAD PAID HIM TO KEEP SILENT . . .
DO NOT KILL ME, SIR . . . I HEARD THE BRITON SAY HE WAS GOING INTO THE CATACOMBS.
AH! THAT IS ALL WE NEED TO KNOW!
AND SOON, IN THE EERIE DARKNESS BENEATH ROME . . .
THERE GOES THE BRITON . . . AND HE CANNOT ESCAPE THIS TIME!
BY THE GODS . . . WE ARE BETRAYED!

THE BRITON MUST BE KILLED TO CLOSE HIS MOUTH! A THOUSAND GOLD PIECES TO THE MAN WHO DEALS WITH HIM!
LEAVE THEIR LEADER TO ME!
THE RUFFIAN LEADER CAME AT OLAC . . . .
IF YOU'RE THE PAID THUG OF HORTIUS, I'LL SHOW NO MERCY! SO BEWARE!
BEFORE I'M FINISHED, YOU'LL BEG FOR MERCY, BRITON!

LIKE LIGHTNING, OLAC THRUST UNDER THE OTHER MAN'S CLUMSY GUARD . . .
UUUGH!
THEN OLAC STRUCK SWIFTLY AT THE NEXT MAN . . .
AAAGH!
TREACHEROUS CURS! YOU ARE NO MATCH FOR A GLADIATOR!
CUTTING AND THRUSTING, OLAC DROVE BACK THE RUFFIANS. BEHIND HIM, FORFEX AND GREB LOOKED ON IN ASTONISHMENT, THEIR SWORDS UNUSED!
HE FIGHTS LIKE A GENIUS, FORFEX!
NOW YOU CAN SEE WHY OLAC IS KNOWN AS THE GREATEST GLADIATOR IN ROME!

AND SUCH WAS THE POWER OF OLAC THAT THE RABBLE FINALLY BROKE AND RAN!

MEANWHILE, THE OLD MAN WHO GUARDED THE CATACOMB ENTRANCE HAD STAGGERED INTO THE STREETS DAZED BY THE BEATING HE HAD BEEN GIVEN BY HORTIUS'S RUFFIANS. HE WAS MET BY THE IMPERIAL GUARD, WHO WERE LOOKING FOR OLAC.
GUARD... HELP!
WHAT AILS THE OLD MAN? SEE TO HIM, CENTURION!

THE OLD MAN GASPED OUT HIS STORY . . .

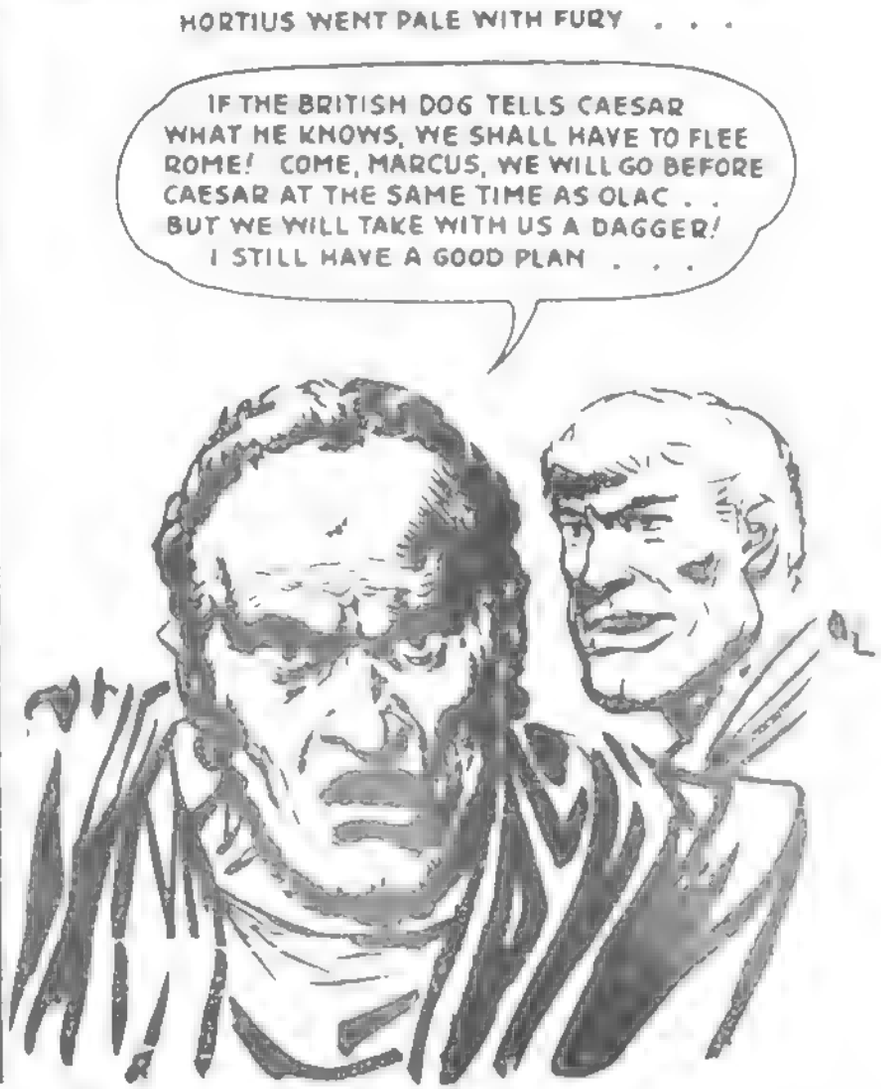
. . . SO THE RUFFIANS ATTACKED ME! AND THEY WENT INTO THE CATACOMBS FOLLOWING OLAC THE GLADIATOR! THEY WERE SENT TO KILL HIM! HE WON'T HAVE A CHANCE!
THEY CAN'T BE THE EMPEROR'S MEN . . . OUR ORDERS WERE TO TAKE OLAC ALIVE! COME ON, CENTURION . . . TO THE CATACOMBS!

A MINUTE LATER, THE IMPERIAL GUARDS WERE POURING INTO THE CATACOMBS. THEY MET THE DEMORALISED RUFFIANS IN FULL FLIGHT, WITH OLAC ON THEIR HEELS . . . !
NEVER MIND THE OTHERS! SEIZE THE BRITON!
LOOK OUT, OLAC . . . IT'S THE LEGION!

THE MIGHTY GREB, ROARING LIKE A LION, FLUNG HIMSELF INTO THE FRAY AGAINST IMPOSSIBLE ODDS!
HOLD, GREB! THESE ARE THE EMPEROR'S MEN ...WE HAVE NO QUARREL WITH THEM!
BUT IF YOU ARE STILL AN OUTLAW THEY ARE HERE TO KILL YOU!
BUT GREB HELD HIS HAND AT OLAC'S COMMAND. AN INSTANT LATER THE THREE FRIENDS WERE IN THE STEELY GRIP OF THE GUARDS . . .
I APPEAL TO YOU, OFFICER... LET GREB AND FORFEX GO FREE! THEY HAVE COMMITTED NO CRIME AGAINST ROME!
MY ORDERS WERE TO BRING YOU TO THE EMPEROR ALIVE, OLAC! HAVE NO FEAR ... YOU WILL NOT DIE FROM MY HAND! BUT THESE OTHERS WERE WITH YOU, SO THEY MUST SUFFER ANY PUNISHMENT THE EMPEROR ORDERS!

OLAC WAS LED CAPTIVE THROUGH THE STREETS OF ROME TO THE IMPERIAL PALACE . . . AND FORFEX, GREB AND SULLUS WENT WITH HIM.

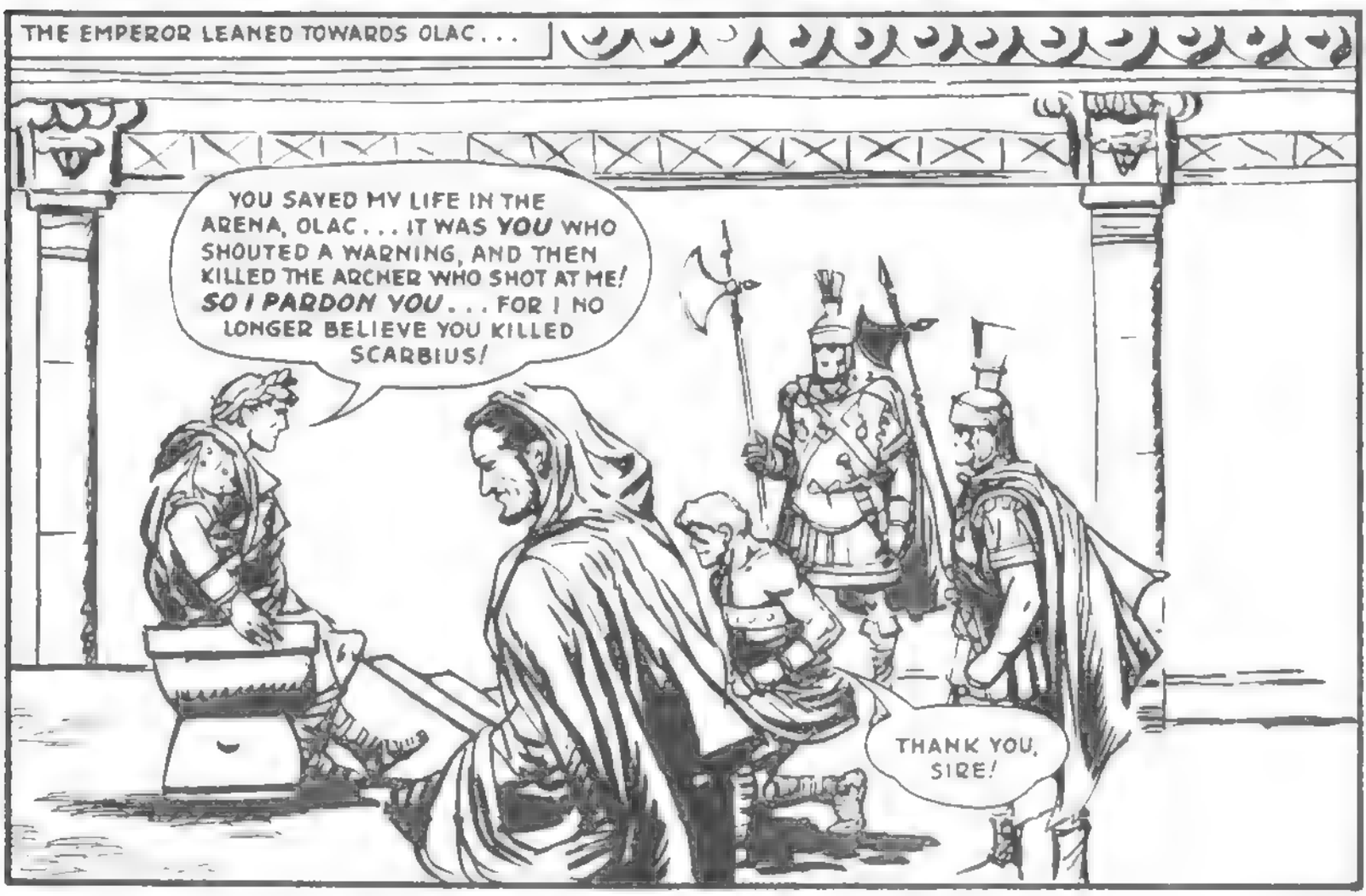
MEANWHILE, NEWS WAS BROUGHT TO HORTIUS BY THE RUFFIANS WHO HAD ESCAPED FROM THE CATACOMBS . . .
OLAC WAS CAPTURED BY THE IMPERIAL GUARD BEFORE WE COULD FINISH HIM OFF! HE IS ON HIS WAY TO CAESAR . . !


HORTIUS WENT PALE WITH FURY . . .
IF THE BRITISH DOG TELLS CAESAR WHAT HE KNOWS, WE SHALL HAVE TO FLEE ROME! COME, MARCUS, WE WILL GO BEFORE CAESAR AT THE SAME TIME AS OLAC . . BUT WE WILL TAKE WITH US A DAGGER! I STILL HAVE A GOOD PLAN . . .

WE BRING OLAC THE GLADIATOR, SIRE! CONDEMNED TO DEATH FOR HIS VILE DEEDS!
BRING HIM HERE . . . I WILL SPEAK WITH HIM BEFORE EXECUTION IS CARRIED OUT!

HORTIUS AND MARCUS WERE WATCHING FROM A SIDE-DOOR . . .
THIS IS OUR LAST CHANCE, MARCUS! I WILL GO FORWARD WITH A HIDDEN DAGGER! WHEN I STAB THE EMPEROR, RUSH INTO THE HALL WITH YOUR MEN AND PUT ALL THE GUARDS TO THE SWORD! THEN WE WILL SAY THAT OLAC STABBED THE EMPEROR, AND WE CAUGHT HIM IN THE ACT!
SO BE IT, HORTIUS!

HORTIUS ADVANCED TOWARDS THE EMPEROR, CLUTCHING A DAGGER UNDER HIS TOGA . . .
IT PLEASES ME, SIRE, TO SEE THAT THE BRITISH DOG IS AT LAST ABOUT TO SUFFER FOR HIS DEEDS!
YOU HAVE ARRIVED IN TIME TO HEAR OLAC QUESTIONED, HORTIUS! GUARD . . . LET THE GLADIATOR KNEEL BEFORE THIS SEAT!


THE EMPEROR LEANED TOWARDS OLAC . . .
YOU SAVED MY LIFE IN THE ARENA, OLAC . . . IT WAS YOU WHO SHOUTED A WARNING, AND THEN KILLED THE ARCHER WHO SHOT AT ME! SO I PARDON YOU . . . FOR I NO LONGER BELIEVE YOU KILLED SCARBIUS!
THANK YOU, SIRE!

THERE STANDS THE SLAYER OF SCARBIUS! HORTIUS THE SENATOR! I HAVE PROOF THAT HORTIUS PLANS TO SEIZE THE EMPIRE! IT WAS HE WHO SCHEMED YOUR ASSASSINATION!
HORTIUS SPRANG FORWARD, DAGGER NOW IN FULL VIEW!
WHY SHOULD I DENY IT NOW? DIE, FOOLISH EMPEROR . . . AND MAKE WAY ON THE THRONE FOR ME!
MARCUS! MASSACRE THESE OTHER DOGS . . . WE WANT NO WITNESSES!

IT WAS OLAC, HANDS STILL BOUND, WHO LAUNCHED HIMSELF TO BLOCK THE ASSASSIN'S BLOW!
UUUUH!
I'LL DEAL WITH HIM, SIRE!

BUT MARCUS AND HIS RUFFIANS WERE CHARGING INTO THE HALL, CUTTING DOWN THE GUARD!
FORTY GOLD PIECES FOR EVERY THROAT YOU CUT! THE EMPIRE IS OUR PRIZE!

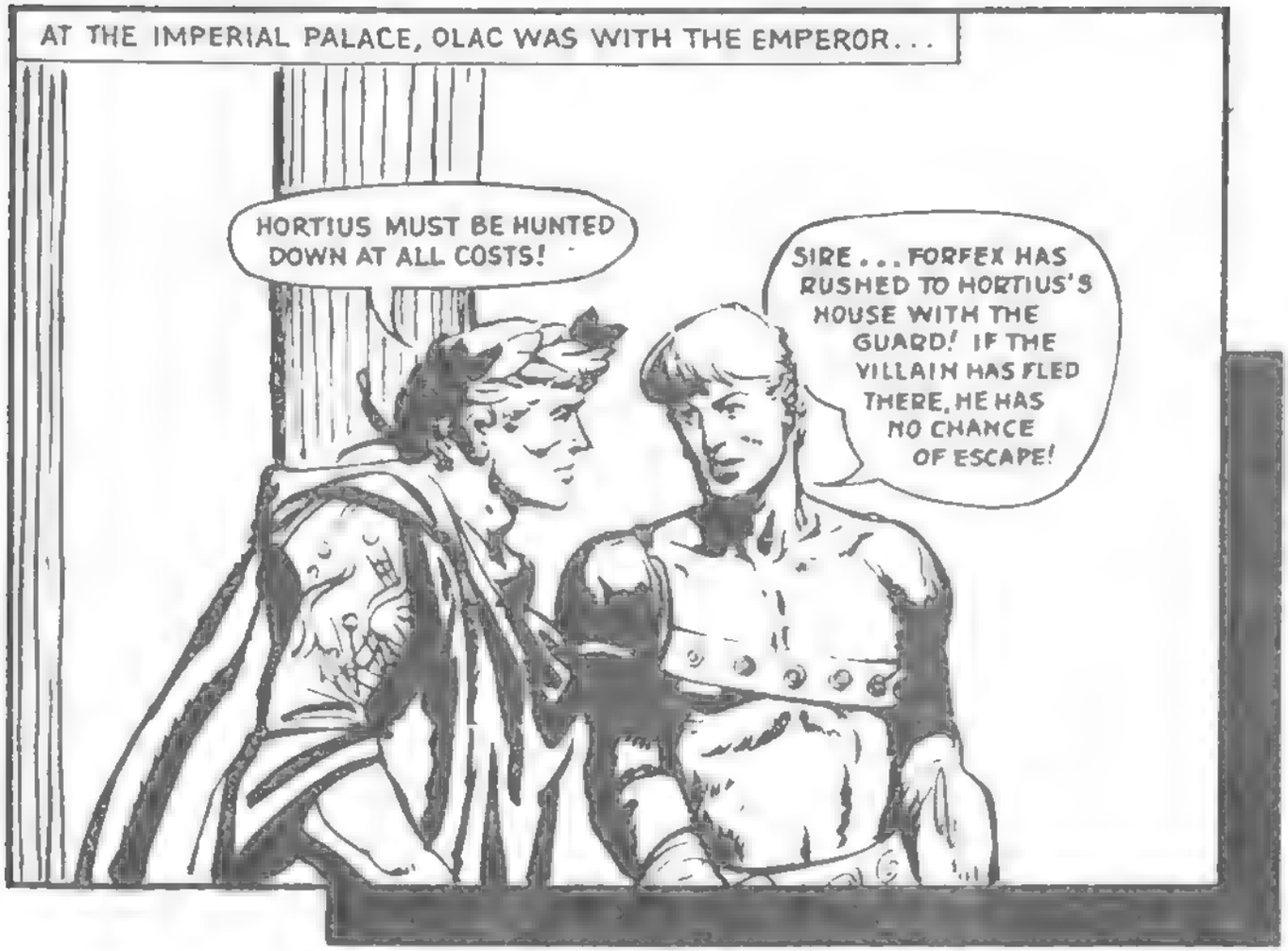
BUT OLAC HAD ALREADY MADE SHORT WORK OF HORTIUS!
GUARDS... FREE OLAC'S COMRADES!
AAAGH!
THEIR BONDS CUT LOOSE, GREB, FORFEX AND SULLUS GRABBED WEAPONS AND RUSHED AT THE ASSASSINS!
LET'S PROVE TO THE EMPEROR WHO HIS LOYAL SUBJECTS ARE!

HURLING HIS DAGGER FROM LONG RANGE, OLAC SAVED THE EMPEROR'S LIFE YET AGAIN!
AAAGH!
DIE, BRITON!
GRAB HIS SWORD, SIRE . . . WE NEED YOUR HELP!

THEN GREB SAVED OLAC FROM CERTAIN DEATH!
THANK YOU, GREB!

IN FIVE MINUTES THE JUDGMENT HALL WAS CLEARED OF ALL OPPOSITION . . . AND THE VILLAINOUS MARCUS LAY AMONG THE DEAD. BUT THE ARCH VILLAIN OF THEM ALL HAD GOT AWAY . . .
WHERE'S HORTIUS?
I GAVE HIM A PUNCH ON THE JAW THAT SHOULD HAVE FELLED AN OX! BUT HE MUST HAVE COME ROUND AND ESCAPED! DON'T WORRY, FORFEX . . . HE WON'T GET FAR!

AT THAT INSTANT, HORTIUS WAS HURRYING FROM ROME IN A CHARIOT . . . HEADING NORTH!
MY ONLY HOPE OF LIFE IS TO HEAD FOR BRITAIN! THE GOVERNOR OF LONDINIUM IS A FRIEND OF MINE. HE'LL PUT HIS LEGIONS AT MY DISPOSAL!


AT THE IMPERIAL PALACE, OLAC WAS WITH THE EMPEROR...
HORTIUS MUST BE HUNTED DOWN AT ALL COSTS!
SIRE... FORFEX HAS RUSHED TO HORTIUS'S HOUSE WITH THE GUARD! IF THE VILLAIN HAS FLED THERE, HE HAS NO CHANCE OF ESCAPE!

FORFEX SOON RETURNED...
HORTIUS HAS ELUDED US! HIS SLAVES SAY HE TOOK A CHARIOT...
...RUSHED OUT OF ROME ON THE ROAD TO THE NORTH!

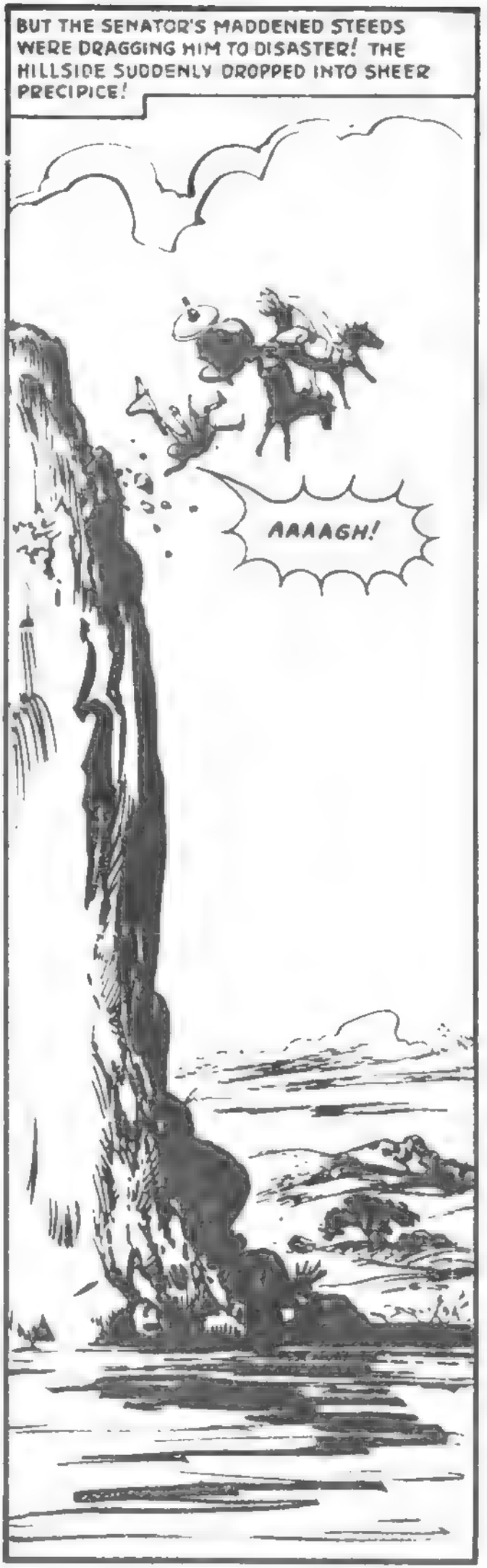
WITHIN MINUTES, OLAC WAS THUNDERING THROUGH ROME TOWARDS THE NORTHERN GATE . . .
I HAVE THE BEST PARTHIAN STEEDS IN THE EMPIRE UNDER MY WHIP . . . SO THERE ISN'T A CHARIOT IN ROME THAT CAN OUTPACE ME! I SHALL SOON CATCH HORTIUS . . .!

IN LESS THAN AN HOUR OLAC'S QUARRY WAS IN SIGHT!
HE'S DRIVING HIS HORSES LIKE A MADMAN! BUT IT WILL AVAIL HIM NOTHING! I HOPE I CAN TAKE HIM ALIVE . . . SO THAT JUSTICE SHALL NOT BE CHEATED!

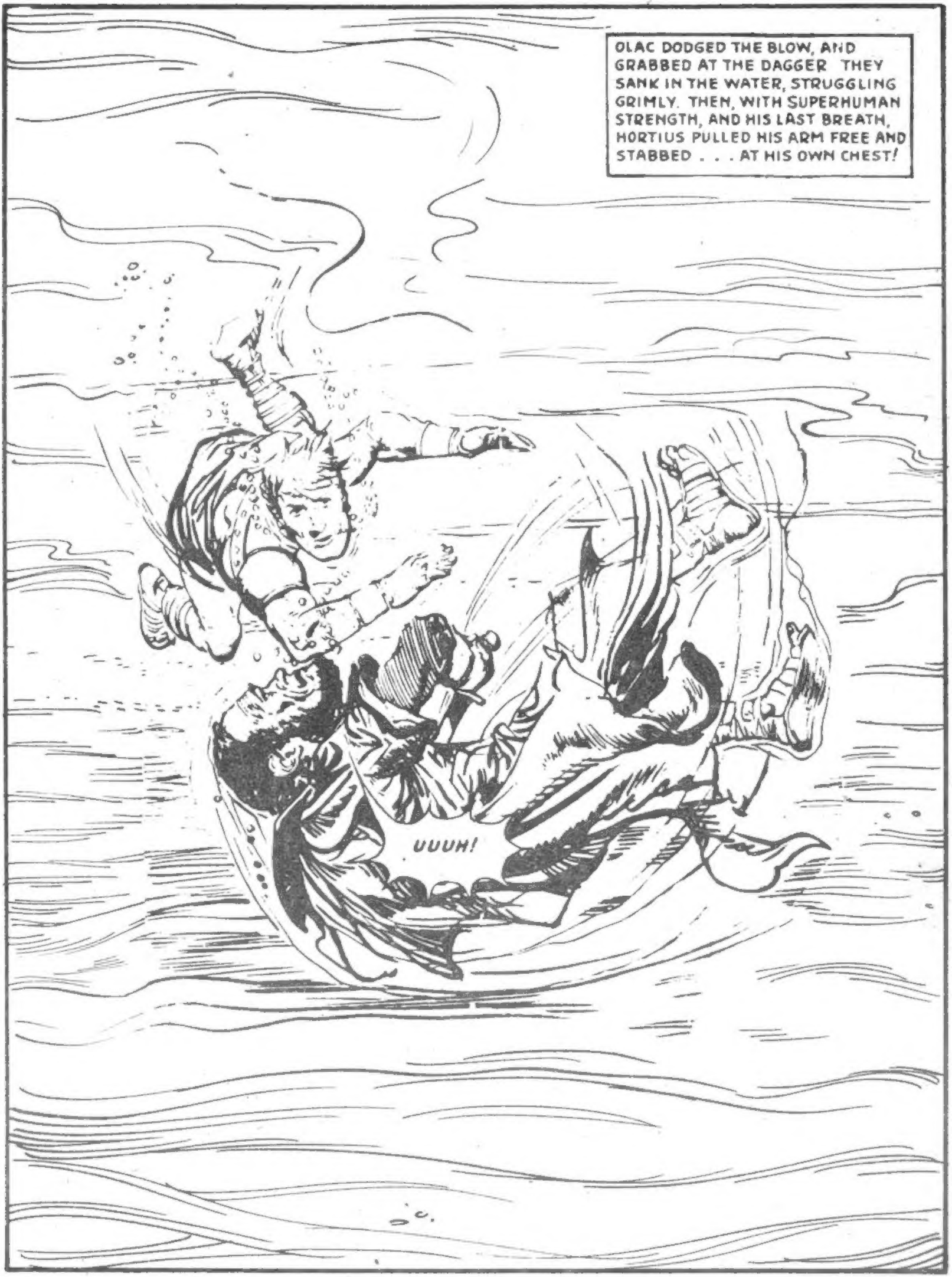
THE GAP BETWEEN THE CHARIOTS CLOSED RELENTLESSLY...
I SHOULD HAVE KILLED HIM WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE!
YOU CANNOT ESCAPE, HORTIUS! YIELD NOW!

AS THEY HURTLED ALONG SIDE BY SIDE, HORTIUS LASHED OUT WITH HIS WHIP AT OLAC!

SUDDENLY HORTIUS JERKED THE REINS, AND HIS HORSES SWERVED WILDLY OFF THE ROAD, AND ACROSS THE OPEN COUNTRY . . .


BUT THE SENATOR'S MADDENED STEEDS WERE DRAGGING HIM TO DISASTER! THE HILLSIDE SUDDENLY DROPPED INTO SHEER PRECIPICE!
AAAAGH!

THE GLADIATOR SAW THAT HIS QUARRY STILL LIVED . . . SWIMMING DESPERATELY IN THE ICY WATERS.
OLAC PLUNGED DOWN . . .
BUT MORTIUS HAD A DAGGER. HE STRUCK OUT WITH IT . . .
BUT FOR YOU I COULD HAVE BEEN MASTER OF ROME!


OLAC DODGED THE BLOW, AND GRABBED AT THE DAGGER THEY SANK IN THE WATER, STRUGGLING GRIMLY. THEN, WITH SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH, AND HIS LAST BREATH, HORTIUS PULLED HIS ARM FREE AND STABBED . . . AT HIS OWN CHEST!
UUUH!

OLAC LEFT HIS FOE IN THE DEPTHS OF THE LAKE. WHEN HE LEFT THE SCENE TO REPORT TO THE EMPEROR, HE KNEW THAT THE PERILS THAT HAD BEGUN WITH THE SLAYING OF SCARBIUS WERE AT LAST OVER...
FAREWELL, HORTIUS! AND MAY THE GODS TREAT YOU MORE JUSTLY THAN YOU TREATED OTHERS!

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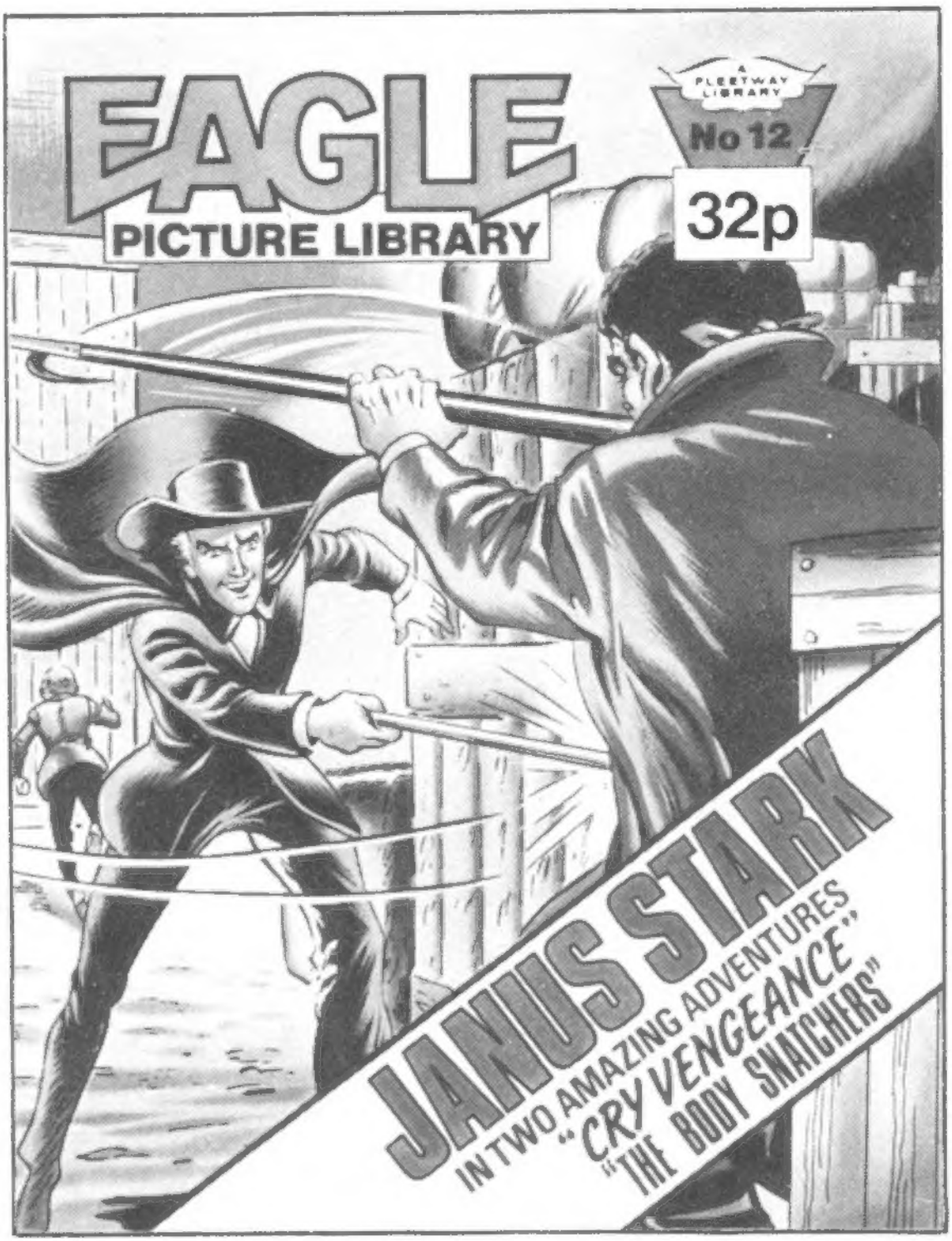

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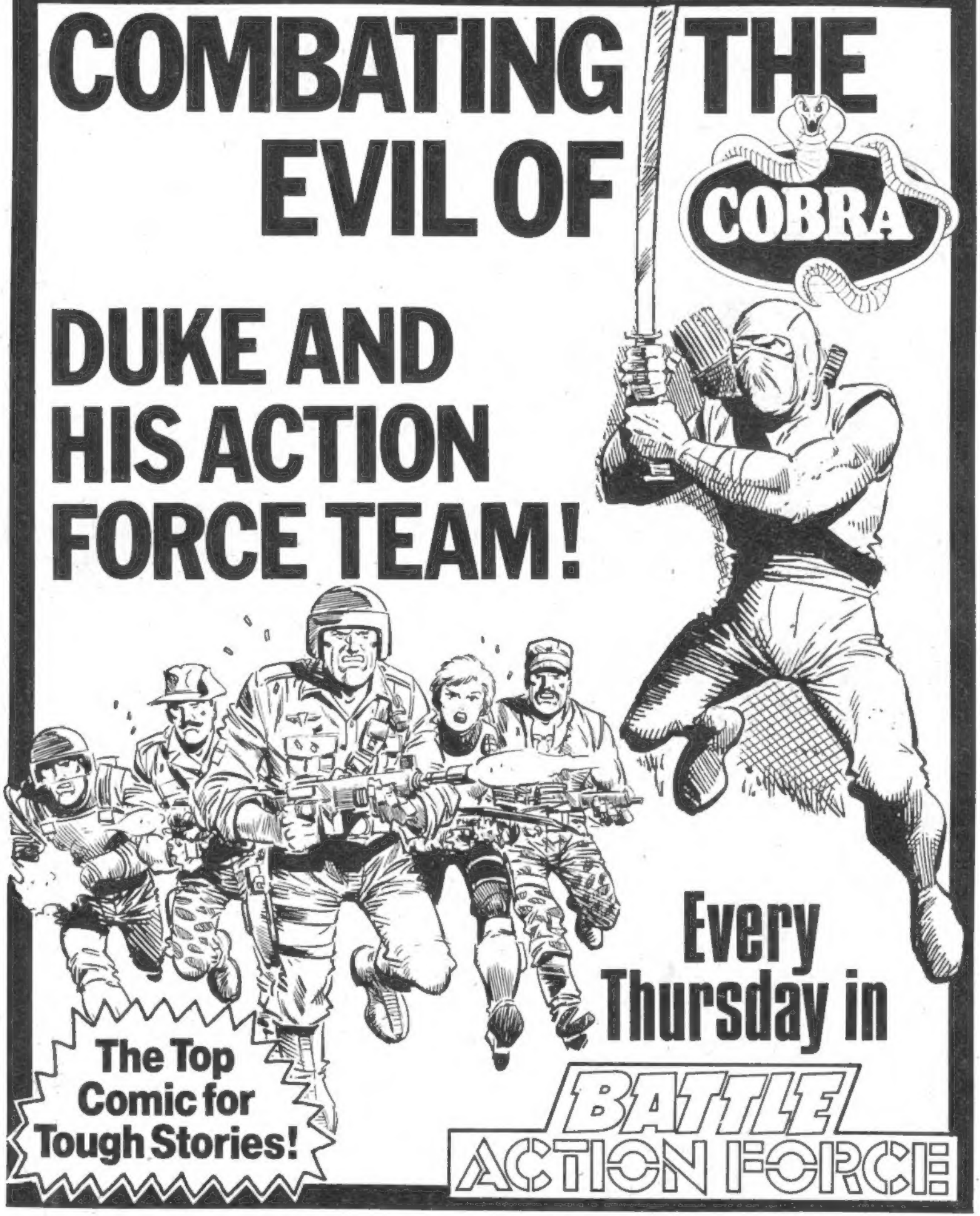

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